



# REPORT ON RELIGION, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION DIALOGUE

Dialogue date: 21st July 2022



UNIVERSAL COALITION OF AFFIRMING AFRICANS UGANDA





## Background

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022, Universal Coalition of Affirming Africans Uganda held a half day dialogue on religion, diversity, and inclusion. The primary purpose was to deepen the understanding of participants on the concept of Diversity and Inclusion(D&I) and to discuss the role of religion as a key player in influencing change in our society.

The dialogue had 43 attendees from a range of fraternities namely, Religion, journalism, politics, health, law enforcement, legal, Diplomats and Human Rights Defenders (HRD). *(Refer to Appendix 1)*



UCAA embraces the diverse nature of our society in which we live. We understand that individuals differ from one another in terms of age, ethnicity, physical appearance, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ideas, experiences, education, and origin. UCAA is a faith-based organisation, so using a religious lens and application of its principles of equality and love for all, we strongly encourage and emphasize that the contributions, presence, and perspectives of all people should be respected, appreciated, and valued regardless of their differences.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) seems to be subjectively understood by a reasonable number of the Ugandan citizenry. However, different groups of people are still deprived of their human rights, subjected to abuse, emotional, physical, sexual, economic, and psychological. These groups are especially; LGBTQ+ persons, Women and Persons living with disabilities. Thus, the need to have a round table discussion on how different key and influential players can collaboratively join efforts in building a society that embraces its diverse nature, accepts, and respects the differences amongst its population.



## Overview about UCAA and the dialogue



Before he began his speech, Mr. Tom Twongyeirwe (National Coordinator UCAA) invited Ms. Winfred Mugambwa in memory of a transgender woman Ms. Mathew Noah (Matt) who had been stabbed to death 1 week prior to the dialogue. Winfred led us through a moment of silence and prayed for the repose of her soul.

Mr. Tom thanked the participants for honoring the invitation, gave a brief overview about UCAA and the dialogue. Tom explained that among others, UCAA’s primary purpose is to spearhead, champion and progress inclusion of all people including LGBTQ+ persons in our communities using a faith-based approach. “While the injustices are happening, we need collaborative efforts to make change happen and religion which is both theoretically and practically driven by the principles of equality and love for all should be at the forefront of this fight” Tom said. “Religion seems to be comfortable raising their voices against injustices on other vulnerable groups but seems to be hesitant when it comes to LGBTQ+ people. Not sure if ‘the love for all ‘principle is discriminative” he added.

“Our question today should be, does Religion in our beautiful Christian country embrace the diverse nature of our society, and if it does, what is its role in ensuring that all our differences are accepted and respected? We may not like talking about it, but it does happen which means that the discussion needs to happen, and it needs to happen now!” Tom further said.

Find Tom’s full speech below: <https://ucaaug.org/tom-twongyeirwes-national-coordinator-opening-remarks-at-religion-diversity-and-inclusion-dialogue-that-took-place-on-21st-july-2022/>



## Official opening remarks by Ambassador Natalie E. Brown



The dialogue was graced by the United States ambassador Natalie E. Brown US mission Uganda. Ambassador Brown noted that the U.S government is committed to advocate for a world free from discrimination, where all people including LGBTQ+ people live their lives with dignity, health and equality.

“It is critical that religious leaders and all people of good conscience reflect upon our individual roles in making society and our communities more inclusive and ensuring that we are not instruments of hate because a society that rejects its diversity instead of embracing it, is a society in conflict with itself” Ambassador Brown said. She also commended all who attended the dialogue and those who would take the message of love back to their respective communities. Find Ambassador Brown’s full remarks below:

<https://ug.usembassy.gov/lgbtqi-religion-diversity-and-inclusion-dialogue-with-universal-coalition-of-affirming-africans-uganda-july-21-2022/>





## Panel discussion

Modulated by Ms. Irene Nanyonjo UCAA's communication officer, we had four panelists:

1. Bishop James Lubega Banda - Presiding Bp. Divine Liberty Centre Ministries
2. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mpambaisi Tom - Head of Kisasi police station.
3. Counsel Justine Balya – lawyer at Human Rights Awareness Promotion Forum (HRAPF)
4. Marjorie Nakimuli -Healthy worker at Most At Risk Population Initiative (MARPI)



Members of the panel started the discussion by sharing most striking experience(s) during their work while serving the key populations particularly the LGBTQ+ community. They shared a good/bad or both experience(s) that stood out most for them.

**Marjorie Nakimuli** shared the story when she lost a gay patient. Prior to his death, he was on parallel line with his family because of his sexuality and so the family was not even ready to accept the deceased. However, Ms. Marjorie used her skills and abilities to convince the family of the deceased accept and conduct the burial ceremony and that was commendable for her. She however admits that it was such a tuff and difficult time for her. With 25 years of experience working with the key populations, Marjorie noted that there is some progress in the healthy sector regarding inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons. She however mentioned that there is still a long way to go especially within the health ministry. She advised and emphasized that religious leaders need to be at the fore front of creating awareness and advocating for inclusion within the healthy sector.



“A lot of work still needs to be done, health workers need to be trained and sensitized on inclusion and particular needs of each group of people. However, this is a religious country, all people respect religious leaders so religious leaders need to get directly involved to facilitate trainings for healthy workers, counseling patients and championing advocacy efforts at both local and national levels. Voices of religious leaders will achieve us inclusive healthy policies” Marjorie said.

**ASP Tom Mpabaisi** Made a disclaimer “All I am going to say here are my words and my individual opinions and not for the institution.” ASP Tom disclaimed. He shared his striking experience which was his first time to handle a case involving LGBTQ+ led organization that had been raided by the community members forcing them out of the area in disagreement with who they are and the kind of work they do. ASP Tom highlighted that he was able to consider the victims as human beings and provided them with protection against the hostile community members. ASP Tom quoted community members’ words “If you leave them behind, we shall stone them to death, take them with you.” The community members shouted. He also noted that as homosexual acts are still illegal in Uganda, it is a little complicated for the law enforcers to give their full support but mentioned that his first approach when a case is reported is that he sees the person as a human and a citizen of Uganda. He said he does his job and let the courts of law do theirs.

**Bp. James Lubega Banda** shared his personal story and experience of being attracted to same sex, a religious leader and married to a heterosexual woman at the sometime. It should be noted that majority of LGBTQ+ people in this country end up getting married to heterosexual partners and it is because of several reasons that include family, societal and religion pressure. Reconciling same sex attraction feelings and the three especially religious values is nearly impossible and such a hard journey. Bp. James’s story was a sad one, especially after coming out to his family. It involved death threats from his wife and really terrible scenarios. Bp. James mentioned that there is steady progress even if it’s still a long way to go but said seeing some religious leaders inclusive is something that was hardly seen as something possible 5 years ago. “The church is very conservative, but we just need to keep doing what we are doing to make this country a better place for not a few, but everyone” Bp. James said.

**Counsel Justin Balya** highlighted several experiences she has had working with the key populations but, the most outstanding she noted was when she had a 4-hour extensive dialogue with a police commanding officer, who had come to arrest some people accused of being gay by the community members neighboring them. The community members were demanding that the accused either vacate the area or get stoned to death. In the end, she said, the police commanding officer was able to understand, and so the victims were able to be rescued and protected. Justin said that as compared to other experiences she has had, that was a short period of time to convince a police commanding officer to let go of LGBTQ+ people when there is a case against them. She also mentioned that the Country have made significant progress towards inclusion for key populations including LGBTQ+ people. For instance, she gave an example of a judge who dismissed a case against LGBTQ+ people who were detained during lockdown, on grounds that the prosecution lacked sufficient evidence. “In my own opinion, we may never achieve decriminalization of consensual same sex through parliament, but we might be lucky through courts of law” Counsel Justin noted.





## Experience sharing sessions

Several people shared their experiences and stories both inspirational and educative. The purpose for each one of them was to influencing mindset change, encourage those loosing hope and create awareness on different aspects of life for key populations in Uganda including LGBTQ+ persons. Stories including;

1. **Adoption story:** Mr. Dave Armstrong a gay single dad from the UK who has adopted 3 children shared his adoption journey. Most importantly, his joy comes from his assurance and conviction that he is impacting 3 kids in a very tremendous positive way and giving them a life, which possibly would not have happened if he did not adopt them. Dave's story is such an encouragement to LGBTQ+ people thinking of having children. It also discredits the myth within Ugandan communities that LGBTQ+ people do not have any contributions towards the development of the country but are just evil and satanic. The story reconfirms that it's not about peoples' sexuality but rather about their contributions in our communities. Dave encouraged the Ugandan authorities to reconsider their decisions on the law governing adoption in the country and allow all people including LGBTQ+ people who have the capacity to raise children, adopt.
2. **All-inclusive church:** Dr Rev Nick Bundock a team rector at an inclusive church of England shared his story and how his parish reached a decision of being LGBTQ+ inclusive. Nick said in 2014, a 15-year-old girl took away her own life because she could not reconcile her sexuality and religious beliefs. He said the incident marked the beginning of the church's journey to reconsider their perceptions on LGBTQ+ people. Nick shared that since the church decided to go inclusive, a lot of good things happened and continue to happen including other vulnerable people finding refuge and confiding in the church, something that never happened when LGBTQ+ people were still excluded in his church. Nick and his church's story encourage Ugandan religious leaders to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ people and that will not only open the doors to LGBTQ+ community but to all people including other vulnerable persons within our communities.
3. **Experiences and stories from the LGBTQ+ community members.** Prior to the dialogue, UCAA had been running a social media campaign filming and documenting religious based discrimination stories and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community members. Videos from the project will be officially launched on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022, but we organized a trailer for this dialogue.

Check it and other stories out on our YouTube channel found here:

<https://youtube.com/channel/UCopewZulhDMNOKp9s-I12Ng>

## Open discussion



Attendees were encouraged to ask questions if any on the previously conducted sessions and share any experience relevant to the topic if any.

**Catherine Namara** asked ASP Tom what evidence the police always looks out for to secure a conviction against LGBTQ+ people when facing charges of canal knowledge against the order of nature. In his response, ASP Tom advised that, the solid evidence that they look at is the actual act of engaging in same sex. Cathy also advised that there is no need to sexualize



LGBTQ+ people. “We have a lot of potential, skills and can do a lot. See me as a good photographer, see me as a good teacher, see another person in line of what they can do better, how I do sex does not define me...” Cathy advised.

**Kengoro Hope** shared her discrimination experience in school. “The school accused me of having an

affair with someone who simply was my best friend. The accusations were made on grounds that she wrote a letter to me and in her letter, she signed off ‘your intimate friend’...” Hope said. Hope narrated how her relationship with her parents since then have never been amended and that the experience negatively impacted her life both at school and at home. She admitted that it left her psychologically tortured and that she is still healing.

She advised that UCAA needs to champion dialogues with heads of schools and teachers on Diversity and Inclusion with specific focus on LGBTQ+ students. “When religious leaders speak, people are more likely to listen than when anyone else speaks, but truth is, LGBTQ+ students do not deserve what they are made to go through once suspected or outed” Hope said.

**Mr. Kalungi Arafat** advised that UCAA will need to deepen engagements with the media, conduct trainings and awareness sessions with journalists to foster inclusive information through the media. Arafat noted that he had never heard of any positive information on LGBTQ+ people through the media and advised that positive stories through the media would quicken the process of influencing mindset change amongst community members. It should be noted that UCAA is already engaging journalists through thought-provoking one on one dialogues and with small groups of 7-10 journalists.





Inclusive religious leaders need to carry on sensitizing other religious leaders who are not inclusive yet on love and inclusion of LGBTQ+ members in the communities.



“We have a lot of religion, culture and social norms that hurt us. Conversations on homosexuality are simply diversionary talk but let’s keep praying for ourselves and our communities.” Rev Can Eric said.

## Outcomes



1. By the end of the dialogue, it was clear that participants even those who had never engaged in such discussions before, had either started to reconsider their thoughts on Diversity and Inclusion(D&I) especially for LGBTQ+ people or had understood more on the concept. “...It was such a great experience and knowledgeable dialogue. I must confess that it added to my line of work and advocacy...” Marion Kutumba texted after the dialogue”. “Thank you UCAA for the good work you are doing, keep doing it and pray for those who are not there yet, we shall all be there at some point. This is a spiritual war fare, and we are together in this” Rev Can Eric said before leading a conclusive prayer at the dialogue.

2. Participants pledged to further the discussions on Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) amongst their peers in their communities. This is a good starting point because when the silence is broken, there is progress happening.

3. In line with the purpose of the dialogue, participants recommended strategies UCAA should implement to ensure an all-inclusive society and that the contributions, presence, and perspectives of all people are respected, appreciated, and valued regardless of their differences. **See recommendations on the next page**



## Challenges



1. There were a lot of people from different parts of the country who had expressed interest to participate in the dialogue unfortunately, we could not accommodate all of them due to budget limitations. To effectively foster inclusion in Ugandan communities, UCAA is challenged to continue conducting regional based similar dialogues to reach more people.

2. There was limited time for participants to exhaust the topic of the discussion, and this was because it was a half day dialogue due to budget limitations. UCAA is challenged to raise more funds to conduct more dialogues for a full day rather than half day.

3. Some attendees who had never interacted with transgender people got offended on interacting with them. But that is a good thing because there is always a beginning of every step. Silence was broken. “This is just unbelievable for men to dress up in dresses, but hey! I am glad I came because I did not know such things happen in Uganda. I Just used to hear stories.” One attendee commented.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In reference to the purpose of the dialogue, its outcomes and challenges, the following are the recommendations;

1. UCAA is urged to apply a holistic approach to champion and spearhead D&I trainings, dialogues, and awareness sessions amongst the identified key players who include; Journalists, head teachers, teachers, healthy workers, religious leaders, parents of LGBTQ+ children and law enforcers. This would result into undeniable positive impact on Ugandan community members including LGBTQ+people and other vulnerable groups through various way including; improved safety and security for the most at risk, all-inclusive healthy service, all-inclusive faith spaces, strengthened partnership with media houses and fostering an all-inclusive society that accepts and respects the differences of its citizens.
2. UCAA is urged to break the silence and spearhead dialogues in faith spaces on sexual health to get voices of religious leaders added to the control of HIV/AIDS spread in our societies but most especially amongst the most at risk populations including LGBTQ+ persons.



3. UCAA is urged to create a platform and coordinate a network of faith institutions/ organizations to collaboratively advocate for inclusion of all people including LGBTQ+ persons and other vulnerable groups.

## Conclusion

It is still quite a long journey to achieve religious, political, economic, legal and social inclusion of all people in Uganda. It is however a journey that is worthy a walk, a sacrifice worthy to make and a price worthy to pay. The destiny of this journey makes all people feel worthy, important, fulfilled, appreciated, included, and respected. That is a society that UCAA a faith based human rights organization would never tire working for. Without inclusion, the society is costed balanced opinions, views, inspired creativity, and innovation that would have enabled a more positive and healthier human experience. On the other hand, a mix of voices (diversity and inclusion), leads our society to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes. To make transformation happen in a country where 98% of the population are religious, religious leaders must be actively involved if not be on the forefront of changing the narrative. Since our establishment in 2017, we have not walked on our own so to all collaborators, donors and partners, thank you for being part of our journey to protect and defend human beings who are deprived of their human rights.



Appendix 1



UNIVERSAL COALITION OF AFFIRMING AFRICANS UGANDA (UCAA\_UG)

Namugongo-Ssonde

DIALOGUE ON RELIGION, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY HELD ON 21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2022 AT PROTEA HOTEL, MARRIOTT KAMPALA, KAMPALA SKYZ

REGISTRATION FORM

NAME	ORGANIZATION/ COMPANY	DISTRICT	SECTOR/ PROFESSION	GENDER	TELEPHONE NO/ EMAIL ADDRESS	SIGNATURE
✓ Bishop A. C. SEMYINJO	SPREC	Kampala	BISHOP/ Director	MALE	0772448958	[Signature]
✓ Rev Nsubuga Jhem	Church of Uganda	Kampala	PRIEST	MALE	0772388908	[Signature]
✓ Anvikó Maureo	MCC	Kampala	Minister	FEMALE	0709857876	[Signature]
✓ Chaplain Louis Inaghe	MCC K'la	Nansana	Priest	Male	0778080871	[Signature]
✓ Sylvia Nakiitya	Kampala HRD	Kampala	HRD	F	0771314165	[Signature]
✓ ARINATIRE GOSIUS	PEARL MAGAZINE	K'LL	SOCIAL WORKER	Male	0785009405/07054040	[Signature]
✓ Kengero Hope	FCSU	Kampala	Rep.	F	0785203746	[Signature]
✓ BITITIRA MEDIATRIX	UEC/UCMB	Kampala	Project officer	F	0772761814	[Signature]
✓ AMUTWONGIRE BRIDGET	GAME CHANGERS	Kampala	Nice chair	F	0701008770	[Signature]
✓ KALUNGI ARATAT	EMMB FC1 SUPERVISOR	Kampala	Project supervisor	M	0704560033	[Signature]



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REGISTRATION FORM

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✓ A. REGINA JAMES KAMBA	DIVINE LIBERTY CENTRE OCAA UG	KAMPALA	BISHOP	M	0777020930	[Signature]
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✓ NYALATO JEFFREY	UCC / OCMB	Kampala	Project Officer	F	072185209	[Signature]
✓ EMOJEL TREVOR	Ecclesiastical Youth Network	Kampala	Youth Co-ordinating	M	0703366594	[Signature]
✓ MRS LILLIAN NSUBUGA	FAITH CAPTURE SOULS	KL	MOTHER	W	0782646786	[Signature]
✓ Winfred Mugambwa	Rights 4 Her	Kakiso	Spiritual Being	F	0782347800	[Signature]
✓ Kwumba Muzamiri	Uganda Muslim medical bureau	KL	MSE / SI	M	0705920252	[Signature]
✓ Faith Kasagga	Albinism brother head Uganda	Wakiso	Director	F	0782530775	[Signature]
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Namugongo-5-sonde

DIALOGUE ON RELIGION, INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY HELD ON 21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2022 AT PROTEA HOTEL, MARRIOTT KAMPALA, KAMPALA SKYZ

#### REGISTRATION FORM

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Namugongo-Ssonde

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✓ ASP <del>mpantisi</del> Tom	Uganda Police	KLA	Police officer	m	0775057505	
✓ Justice Baly	HRAPF	KLA	Lawyer	M	0789609306	

