

Comparative Analysis of Media Coverage Related to Uganda's 2014 and 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Acts

By Brian Pellot



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- The letters of the acronym LGBTQI+ appear in various forms and combinations depending on their use by the individuals or the organizations referenced.
- Names of individuals and some organizations and events have been removed or anonymized.
- Quotes from sources have been edited for brevity and clarity.

Glossary of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Terms

- **AHA:** Anti-Homosexuality Act (2014 or 2023)
- **The 2014 law:** Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014. Introduced on 14 October 2009, passed by Parliament on 20 December 2013, signed into law on 24 February 2014, annulled on 1 August 2014. Also referred to as “the 2014 period” in this report.
- **The 2023 law:** Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. Introduced on 3 March 2023, passed by Parliament on its third reading/revision on 21 March 2023, returned to Parliament by President Museveni on 21 April 2023, passed again with minor amendments on 2 May 2023, and signed into law on 26 May 2023, officially taking effect on 30 May 2023 upon being gazetted. Also referred to as “the 2023 period” in this report.
- **The Monitor:** The *Daily Monitor*, the *Saturday Monitor* and *Sunday Monitor* are/were all published by Monitor Publications Limited with overlapping editorial teams. For clarity and ease of unified analysis and coding, all three are referred to as simply “*The Monitor*”.
- **LGBTQI+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bi/Pansexual, Trans/GNC/Gender Diverse, Queer, Intersex, and other gender and sexual diversities
- **SSOGIE/SOGIESC/SOGI:** Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expressions - often used as a synonym for LGBTQI+, but SSOGIE deemphasizes identity politics, making the term more inclusive of MSM, WSW, etc.

Overview

Nearly a decade after Uganda enacted its short-lived Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014, a new and harsher Anti-Homosexuality Act came into force in May 2023.

This report compares the legal text of Uganda’s 2014 and 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Acts, analyzes and compares local contemporaneous news media coverage of each law, and assesses the impact of media sensitization trainings for journalists and media advocacy trainings for human rights defenders on LGBTQ+ news coverage in Uganda.

Introduction

The Arcus Foundation’s Social Justice Program envisions a world in which all LGBTQ people live with dignity, safety, and opportunity in inclusive communities and societies. The Program pursues the following three goals:

1. Increased safety for LGBTQ people
2. Increased LGBTQ-affirming protections
3. Increased inclusion and acceptance of LGBTQ people
4. Strong Movements

The anticipated outcome of the third goal envisages: “positive public perceptions, narratives, and discourses that appreciate the full diversity and experiences of LGBTQ people, produced in conjunction with or by LGBTQ people themselves, especially those pushed to the margins.”

The Arcus Foundation commissioned this report in the context of the Social Justice Program’s 2023 midpoint strategic review. The analysis was undertaken in an effort to understand whether and how the media landscape in Uganda had changed between 2014 and 2023 with respect to coverage of LGBTQ people and anti-homosexuality bills in particular.

In light of Uganda’s dangerous new Anti-Homosexuality Act, which came into force in May 2023, the media scans and broader analysis in this report seek to answer the following key questions:

- How does the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014 (which was invalidated on procedural grounds less than six months after becoming law) align with and differ from the current Anti- Homosexuality Act, 2023?
- How do coverage tone, source statement tone, and thematic reporting emphasis of national print media coverage surrounding Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014 compare to contemporary coverage of the current Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023?
- How have media sensitization trainings for journalists and media advocacy capacity building trainings for human rights defenders in Uganda impacted the quality of national media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues since 2014?

Executive Summary of Major Findings

Comparing news media coverage surrounding the 2014 law to that of the 2023 law, overall media representation of LGBTQ people improved by 7.1%, according to average Media Monitoring and Response Coalition (MMRC) rating, our most comprehensive indicator, which improved from 2.83 to 2.63 (the lower the MMRC rating, the better the coverage).

The number of stories rated “Excellent” (MMRC: 1) or “Mostly Good” (MMRC: 2) increased from 12 to 15 (25% improvement), and the number of stories rated “Poor/Problematic” (MMRC: 4) or “Terrible/Dangerous” (MMRC: 5) decreased from 9 to 8 (11.1% improvement), demonstrating improvement at both ends of the coverage spectrum.

The number of media clips featuring net-positive source statements increased from 6 to 9 (50% improvement) and those with net-negative source statements decreased from 13 to 11 (15% improvement). This improvement in overall source statements tone can largely be attributed to a 200% rise in media clips (from 3 to 9) that included local SSOGIE/LGBTQI+ sources in 2023.

Compared to 2014, media coverage surrounding the 2023 law was somewhat more balanced and less biased towards the anti-homosexuality law and its supporters. Politicians (MPs and President Museveni) still dominated media discussion surrounding the 2023 law, as they did in 2014, but with much of President Museveni’s narrative dominance being replaced by that of other government officials. Human rights defenders, for the better, received more prominent placement in terms of source statements and op-eds in 2023.

In terms of thematic reporting emphasis, the notion that homosexuality is “unAfrican / western / colonial / alien / a threat to Uganda’s sovereignty / a foreign mercenary ploy / or the result of economic hardship and subsidized by foreign entities” remained the most commonly cited or alluded to theme across time periods, appearing in 22 clips in the 2014 period and 23 clips in the 2023 period. The largest change in thematic emphasis between the two periods pertained to discussions around: “whether homosexuality is a result of nature or nurture / whether it can be altered through so-called conversion therapy” (up from 4 to 11, +175%); traditional family (up from 6 to 15, 150%); human rights (up from 10 to 17, +70%); and homosexuality as it relates to children, with particular emphasis on abuse and myths around “recruitment” (up from 11 to 16, +45.5%).

In terms of dominant themes, a plurality of news media coverage in 2023 focused on religious leaders’ and politicians’ false claims surrounding homosexuality and child abuse. Although mentioned in 11 clips in the 2014 period, child abuse/recruitment was a dominant theme in only one of those clips. This compares to 16 clips that mentioned it in 2023, and 11 clips in which it was a dominant theme (representing a 1,000% increase, the largest numeric and percentage change of any metric tracked between the two reporting periods). Majority backers of the 2023 law rested their legal arguments for supporting it on these baseless claims.

Media reporting analysis and interviews with local activists and journalists confirm that discussions and debates leading up to the 2023 law focused far more on children than in 2014, a thematic emphasis that likely contributed to child-related provisions being included in the final 2023 law. These new child-specific provisions reflect and reinforce dangerous myths that queer people corrupt and prey on children.

On the whole, the 2023 law is more sweeping and severe than the 2014 law. Notably, the 2023 law includes the death penalty for consensual same-sex sexual activity among some adults (including people over 75 and people living with disabilities) whereas the maximum punishment in 2014 was life imprisonment.

Interviews with key human rights defenders and journalists in Uganda, summarized in the [Comparative Media Analysis: 2014 vs. 2023](#) section below, confirm and support the above findings. These expert sources unanimously agree that media sensitization trainings for journalists and media advocacy capacity building trainings for human rights defenders in Uganda have positively impacted the quality of national media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues since 2014.

Comparing the Laws (2014 vs. 2023)

Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014¹ (hereafter “the 2014 law” or “in 2014”) was introduced by MP David Bahati on 14 October 2009, passed by Parliament on 20 December 2013, signed into law on 24 February 2014, and ruled invalid/annulled on 1 August 2014 on procedural grounds because it was passed without the required quorum². Bahati is a member of President Museveni's ruling National Resistance Movement political party.

Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023³ (hereafter “the 2023 law” or “in 2023”) was introduced by MP Asuman Basalirwa on 3 March 2023, passed by Parliament on its third reading/revision on 21 March 2023, returned to Parliament by President Museveni on 21 April 2023, passed again with minor amendments on 2 May 2023, and signed into law on 26 May 2023, officially taking effect on 30 May 2023 upon being gazetted. Basalirwa is a member of the minority Justice Forum/JEEMA political party.

In both laws, a person who commits “the offense of homosexuality” is liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for life.

In the 2014 law, a person who committed the offense of “aggravated homosexuality” was liable to imprisonment for life⁴, whereas the 2023 law makes this offense punishable by death.

In 2014, offenders of the “aggravated homosexuality” provision included people living with HIV. The 2023 law dropped this category (which had appeared in earlier drafts of the 2023 bill) but expanded the definition of “aggravated homosexuality” to include consensual sex with people over 75 years old, people with disabilities, and, vaguely, “anyone in an altered state of consciousness due to the influence of medicine, drugs, alcohol or any other substance that impaired his or her judgment”. Degree of impairment is not specified or quantified in the law.

The 2014 law made an “attempt to commit homosexuality” punishable by seven years imprisonment and “attempt to commit aggravated homosexuality” by imprisonment for life. In the 2023 law, those sentences are 10 years and 14 years, respectively.

Both laws define “child” as anyone below 18 (in alignment with Ugandan laws pertaining to heterosexual age of consent). The 2023 law includes new sections on “child offenders” and “child grooming”. “Child offenders” (legal minors convicted of homosexuality or aggravated homosexuality), face up to three years imprisonment. “Child grooming” includes supplying children with any material demonstrating or illustrating a

sexual act between persons of the same sex (as might appear in some international Comprehensive Sexuality Education materials) and is punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment.

The 2023 law adds provisions that disqualify convicted people from “employment in a child care institution or in any other institution which places him or her in a position of authority or care of a child or a vulnerable person until such a time as a probation, social and welfare officer determines that the person is fully rehabilitated or no longer poses a danger to a child or a vulnerable person” and requires them to “disclose the conviction when applying for employment” in such an institution—regardless of whether children or vulnerable people were involved in the convicted person's case.

These new child-specific provisions reflect and reinforce dangerous myths that queer people corrupt and prey on children. As will be discussed in the sections that follow, media reporting analysis and interviews with local activists and journalists found that discussions and debates leading up to the 2023 law focused far more on children than in 2014, a thematic emphasis that likely contributed to these provisions being included in the final 2023 law.

The 2023 law makes “promotion of homosexuality” punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment (the 2014 law prescribed up to 7 years for this offence). “Promotion” includes providing financial support for or publishing any material “promoting or encouraging” homosexuality or the “observance or normalisation of [such] conduct”. This provision echoes and exceeds similar “propaganda/promotion” provisions in Nigeria and Russia and creates a chilling effect on freedom of expression for Ugandan society at large.

While President Museveni has publicly stated that “being” homosexual is not criminal under the 2023 law, the legal text is vague enough to potentially render any public expression of being (wearing a shirt that says “I'm gay,” for example) as illegal “promotion”. “The law now says that a homosexual will not be criminalised for merely being so, if he/she keeps the being to oneself,” Museveni [said in early June 2023](#), again challenging freedom of expression rights enshrined in Uganda's Constitution.

The 2023 law adds a “duty to report acts of homosexuality” section that compels “a person who knows or has a reasonable suspicion that a person has committed or intends to commit the offence of homosexuality or any other offence under this Act to report the matter to police for appropriate

action". The law does not specify punishment except for in cases where the victim is a "child or vulnerable person" (which includes consenting adults with disabilities, those over 75 years old, and, oddly, illiterate persons), in which case failure to report may be punishable by up to five years imprisonment. This "duty to report" provision, though toned down in the final law compared to earlier drafts, fosters an environment of fear and encourages/sanctions witch hunts and unconstitutional privacy violations against queer people.

The 2023 law also adds a "rehabilitation of homosexual" section, which allows the court to "order the provision of social services for purposes of rehabilitating the convicted person". This provision normalizes and institutionalizes dangerous and disproved "conversion therapy" practices.

Before it became law, MPs Fox Odoi-Oywelowo and Paul Kwizera Bucyana issued a [minority report](#) on the 2023 bill in March 2023. This report noted the bill's objective to "protect the traditional family" by "strengthening the nation's capacity to deal with emerging internal and external threats to the traditional, heterosexual family", "protecting the cherished culture of the people of Uganda [and] legal, religious, and traditional family values of Ugandans against the acts of sexual rights activists seeking to impose their values of sexual promiscuity on the people of Uganda" and "protecting children and youth who are made vulnerable to sexual abuse through homosexuality and related acts"⁵. As noted below in this report's media analysis sections, these stated objectives reflect and reinforce false and dangerous dominant narratives and fears about homosexuality in the country.

The authors of this minority report asserted that the bill was misconceived and unnecessary, chiefly because its provisions are 1) already covered by the Penal Code Act and 2) unconstitutional with regard to "the rights and freedom of expression, association, and liberty, privacy, Equality and Freedom from Discrimination, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment". The minority report further notes: "Court in the case of Victor Mukasa & Another vs Attorney General and Kasha Jacqueline, David Kato Kisule and Onziema vs Rolling Stone Ltd and Giles Muhame found that constitutionally protected rights belong to all Ugandans, whatever their perceived sexuality."

Page 8 of the 2023 [majority report](#) notes that "media has recently been awash with reports of sodomy and lesbianism in Ugandan schools and have reported that grooming and recruitment of school children into homosexuality has taken shape in Uganda. Incidents of teachers engaging their students in homosexuality are being reported with increasing regularity,

schools have reported expelling homosexual students while teaching materials recognising and normalising same sex relationships have found their way into schools ... a number of non-governmental organisations have been found to directly promote the normalisation of same sex relations in Uganda," citing the [NGO Board's suspension of the activities of Sexual Minorities Uganda](#) in August 2022. Examples of such media reports are captured and discussed in "Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022"⁶, excerpts of which appear at the bottom of this report.

The 2023 majority report concedes, "Whereas homosexuality as an offence already exists in the law book under the Penal Code Act, there is a need to redefine the law, emphasizing the new and emerging matters which are not contained in the Penal Code Act such as promotion of homosexuality and the recruitment of children into homosexuality which have been blamed for the rising incidents of homosexuality in Uganda." The authors' legal argument/justification for the 2023 law thus rests on these alleged "new and emerging threats" facing children—without providing any evidence of such threats beyond hearsay.

A [report published by Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum \(HRAPF\) on 14 July 2023](#) notes that HRAPF handled 65 cases across its legal aid network in the first month after the 2023 law came into force. Of these 65 cases, 46 involved actions that specifically targeted people because of their real or presumed sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and affected a total of 54 individuals. 23 cases involved violence or threats of violence; 19 involved evictions from rented property; and 4 involved arrests on sexuality-related cases. These 46 SSOIGIE-related cases documented between 30 May and 30 June 2023 exceed the 37 such cases reported in the month before enactment (29 April - 28 May 2023) and 15 such cases the previous year (30 May - 30 June 2022). In this year-to-year comparison, HRAPF notes significant increase in the number of cases involving violence against persons based on their real or presumed SSOIGIE identity, suggesting the 2023 law and fear mongering statements by politicians and religious leaders have directly and negatively impacted Uganda's queer community.

"This data demonstrates the continuing impact of the AHA on the lives and livelihood of LGBTQ people, with the law already being enforced by the police authorities, the local council authorities, the courts and even the general population. The statistics show a clear connection between the enactment of the AHA and the cases involving violence and violations against human rights of persons on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity," HRAPF's report concludes.

Media Coverage Analysis of the 2014 Law

In early 2014, before President Museveni signed that year's Anti-Homosexuality Bill into law, Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) published a report titled [Expanded Criminalisation of Homosexuality in Uganda: A Flawed Narrative](#) in response to the bill, which Parliament had already passed. In this report, SMUG challenged dominant political and public discourse and justifications surrounding the bill. As per the report: "These include the myths that:

- A homosexuality is **alien to Africa**;
- B homosexuality is **mutable and a mental disorder**;
- C expanded criminalisation is necessary to **protect the traditional African family unit**;
- D expanded criminalisation is necessary to **maintain strong religious convictions**;
- E expanded criminalisation will help **prevent the spread of HIV**;
- F expanded criminalisation will help **prevent child abuse**; and
- G gay and lesbian persons are asking for **special rights and privileges.**"

These myths cited by SMUG, particularly A⁷, D⁸, and F, accurately reflect the insidious rhetorical arguments that dominated news media coverage in the years leading up to the 2014 law's assent. Concerns about HIV were reflected in the 2014 law's text but rarely mentioned in news coverage. The topic of child abuse appeared in media coverage but was not the primary dominant narrative (as it became in 2023). The "special rights and privileges" myth SMUG cites was minimal in media coverage of both periods, perhaps because news coverage about the anti-homosexuality laws focused more on the legal text at hand rather than any efforts to advance separate affirming legislation.

Twelve days after the first anti-homosexuality bill was introduced in October 2009, then-MP Margaret Muhanga [published a fearmongering conspiracy-laden op-ed](#) in *NewVision* that captured the frenetic tone of the moment and reflected some of the prevailing points of attack SMUG cites in its 2014 report (cited above). In her diatribe, Muhanga accused human rights defenders who opposed the bill of being "slaves living under neo-colonialism." "God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steven," she writes, declaring same-sex sexual activity "un-Godly" before offering slippery slope/nonsensical arguments/fears about human extinction if everyone becomes gay. "Remember these homosexuals

cannot reproduce. They must recruit, and they want our children," she warns. To this fear narrative, Muhanga adds disgust: "men who practise homosexuality get a leaking anus. This means, therefore, that they will be required to use nappies like babies to avoid soiling their clothes." Excrement-related disgust narratives surrounding male same-sex sexual activity was particularly prevalent in Uganda at this time, as infamously captured in homophobic pastor Martin Ssempe's "[eat da poo poo](#)" lecture.

Following Muhanga's op-ed, an unnamed staff reporter for *The Observer* wrote in January 2010, "this is my major discomfort with homosexuality - it is not emerging naturally but rather as a result of intense campaigns in schools, luring people with money and all sorts of falsehoods." The fact that a leading newspaper published an opinion piece written by one of its own journalists that includes such falsehoods and bias is an indictment of the professional ethics of Ugandan journalism at this time. Picking up this youth recruitment myth, in May 2011 *The Observer* published a letter from a "concerned Ugandan citizen" who wrote, "apparently, there's rampant recruitment of Makerere University students into the gay lifestyle by certain groups using an inducement of Shs 800,000 monthly allowance!" Similar baseless hearsay claims appeared across news outlets during this period in both op-eds and reported news stories with little to no apparent fact-checking to counter or correct them.

Although most op-eds and news articles in this period included dangerous myths and falsehoods, some journalists seemed to at least strive for balance, letting one source spew hatred about queer people (without adequately fact checking or challenging false statements) and another to say vaguely affirming things. In a December 2009 article in *The Observer* titled "Understanding homosexuality," the reporter pits the late LGBT rights activist David Kato against anti-LGBT activist Stephen Langa, quoting Langa, "In one study, 73% of homosexuals admitted molesting children. Is this a lifestyle we want to promote?" without fact checking or mentioning/referencing the study in question. The journalist goes on to write, "Certainly the idea that a man inserts his male organ into the part of the body through which excreta is discharged sounds gross," along with similar, often sensational phrases and frames that make his bias clear.

Several somewhat human-rights affirming op-eds about the 2014 law were published during this period but were either

weakly argued, perhaps due to the authors' fears of retaliation, or advanced "love the sinner hate the sin" type arguments. For the former, see this philosophical January 2014 op-ed by a university ethics lecturer. For the latter, see this March 2014 op-ed by MP Betty Nambooze and this [December 2012 op-ed by former MP Morris Ogenga Latigo](#).

The most affirming traditional media coverage found during this scoping period came in the form of an op-ed written by a lecturer in International and Regional Human Rights Law at Makerere University in January 2010 who argued that the bill was unnecessary due to existing laws, which the author described as unconstitutional. He concludes, "the Anti-Homosexuality Bill should be rejected by Parliament, and by all right thinking Ugandans as being at best unnecessary and at worst retrogressive." A similar op-ed in April 2014 written by an advocate of Uganda's High Court addressed the legal dangers of the 2014 law's vagueness. Unlike in 2023, when most affirming op-eds were penned by queer and ally human rights defenders, in 2014, such op-eds came almost exclusively from legal scholars.

The most powerful affirming source statements in this period came from Uganda's [former Vice President Speciosa Kazibwe, who issued a statement in March 2014](#) saying, "I am in full solidarity with the LGBT community and I will continue to defend their rights in Uganda and across Africa. Rest assured of my unwavering support and action for the realization of the rights for every human being, which has been my struggle since childhood." At the time of her statement, Kazibwe served as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. Also in March 2014, one month after the 2014 law was enacted, *The Observer* published a lengthy Q&A with MP Fox Odoi-Oywelowo in which he details the many ways that law was unconstitutional. The interviewer asks several inappropriate questions near the end of the Q&A about Odoi-Oywelowo's own sexuality and whether he is being paid by "the homosexual lobbyists" or "seeking favours from the West," accusations he deftly dismisses.

Much of the traditional media coverage in this period featured fear mongering statements from MPs and sensational homophobic tabloid reporting. More sober news coverage focused on President Museveni's politicking around the bill/law to appease 1) foreign partners and funders who opposed it and 2) local constituents and government colleagues who overwhelmingly supported it. This politicking included deliberations around a farcical and logically flawed "[science report](#)" Museveni's office commissioned to determine if homosexuality results from "nature or nurture"—ostensibly

a stalling tactic that produced no definitive results despite the scientists and Museveni claiming otherwise. Somewhat bizarrely, and presumably for the same (stalling) purposes, Museveni's office commissioned a near identical study in 2023, as though the one from less than a decade prior had never happened, and reached the same flawed conclusion used to justify enacting the 2023 law.

Beyond his dangerous actions (enacting the 2014 law), [Museveni made false and dangerous statements upon signing](#) it in March 2014, saying "Homosexuals are actually mercenaries. They are heterosexual people but because of money they say they are homosexuals ... These mercenary homosexual prostitutes have to be punished. Just like those who are recruiting them." He made similar accusations in [a statement to President Obama in February 2014](#).

Statements by religious leaders were prevalent and overwhelmingly negative surrounding the 2014 law, though somewhat less virulent than in the 2023 period (including late-2022 clips captured in "Media Representation of LGBTIQ+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022").

In December 2012 the [Seventh-day Adventist church in Uganda backed the enactment of the Anti-homosexuality Bill into law](#), with the church president in East and Central Africa saying, "Our stand is 'zero tolerance' to this vice and to western influence on this crucial issue because God says no to it." In April 2014, then Archbishop of the Church of Uganda the Most Rev Stanley Ntagali said that as much as Ugandans were concerned about homosexuality, greed and glorification of material wealth were more pressing concerns, adding "We must assert our sovereignty and do what it takes to protect our children from being recruited into an immoral life and exploited by others." That same month the executive secretary of Uganda Catholic Medical Bureau (UCMB) was reported as saying, "although the law criminalises homosexuality, which is also considered a sin in the Church, [homosexuals would not be locked out of Catholic hospitals](#)."

Other reporting surrounding the 2014 law during this period focused on "Western" powers condemning the bill and imposing travel and visa bans against "key individuals responsible for drafting and adopting" it, along with news analysis about [global trade relations and the economic ramifications](#) of the law.

Media Coverage Analysis of the 2023 Law

Whereas the 2014 law was more than four years in the making upon its enactment, the 2023 law was introduced and enacted in less than three months. In an [op-ed published on 9 February 2023 in *The Independent*](#), SMUG's executive director shared his thoughts on why Parliament was once again debating homosexuality: "The reason for the timing of this new wave of homophobia, I suspect, is quite simple and yet complex to deconstruct. This 'moral awakening' seems like a push back against LGBTQ human rights advocacy. Our advocacy seemed to have threatened, discomfited, and destabilized patriarchal masculinities hence inadvertently inviting them to use the hetero-patriarchal state and her institutions to reassert male dominance. Dear, [sic] reader you can't imagine the fear and the threats from parents, neighbours and families that worry that we are recruiting their children. A baseless allegation that is uncritically purveyed in our mainstream and social media."

Writer Charles Onyango-Obbo added further insight in a 1 March 2023 op-ed in *The Monitor* titled "[Uganda's 'anti-homos' war isn't about gay sex](#)," writing, "This call to arms against 'gayism' might be puzzling because it is unprovoked. There has been no gay pride parade, no public gay marriage, nothing. Because there are no such obvious triggers, it helps [to] clarify something about the war against homosexuality; it is not about homosexuality. It is a red flag operation, code for a bigger social-cultural war. Homosexuality is its central narrative because it is emotive and a form of sexuality that neatly symbolises all the other forces threatening the good old social order. Sex is, of course, at the core of this war, but not necessarily gay sex. The real culprit is sexual liberation."

Of the narrative myths about homosexuality SMUG cited in its 2014 report (referenced above), Myth A (alien to Africa) remained the most overwhelmingly prevalent (in 23 clips), while Myths B (mutable and a mental disorder), and C (threat to traditional African family unit) surged in prevalence (from 4 to 11 clips and 6 to 15 clips, respectively, between the 2014 and 2023 periods). Myths around religion and morality remained prevalent and steady. Myth F (fearmongering about child abuse) surged in 2022 (as seen in "Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022") and dominated media coverage of, and new provisions added to, the 2023 law. Although mentioned in 11 clips from the 2014 period, child abuse/recruitment was a dominant theme in only one of those clips. This compares

to 16 clips that mentioned it in 2023, and 11 clips in which it was a dominant theme (representing a 1,000% increase, the largest numeric and percentage change of any metric tracked between the two reporting periods).

Source statements by religious leaders and politicians about children and homosexuality, as reported (often uncritically) by local news media, spread baseless accusations of child "recruitment," "promotion" of homosexuality by adults, and same-sex sexual activity among children at schools. Anti-homosexuality activists effectively used these unfounded fear-based narratives about children to bolster support for the 2023 law, which passed with only one MP (Fox Odoi-Oywelowo) voting against it.

In a story titled "[Leaked report shows intent to criminalise gay activities](#)," published 12 February 2023 in *The Monitor*, the reporter wrote, "Parliament recently heard that some NGOs were actively recruiting schoolchildren into same-sex relations. Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa last month told the House that he had heard 'painful stories' and that many citizens, including parents, were 'suffering in silence' from the psychological damage of forced recruitment to homosexuality." The author goes on to quote SMUG's executive director saying, "Given the moral atrophy of Parliament, they look for easy baits from which they assert themselves as vanguards of morality."

A story written by *The Observer* team and published 15 February 2023 titled "[Homosexuality: How students get hooked](#)" does not address the impending 2023 bill directly (it was only introduced two weeks later) but perfectly captures the fear mongering climate about child recruitment that influenced its drafting and eventual passage. "Tayebwa said Ugandan schools had been infiltrated and had become recruitment centers," the author writes, before quoting Tayebwa and another MP speaking in apocalyptic language about the need to "save humanity and our country" and Pastor Martin Ssempe (of "[eat da poo poo](#)" infamy) saying, "In most cases, the young lady or boy with so much money in school is linked to gay activities. ... Universities are now used as indoctrination centres so that when young lawyers graduate, they are brainwashed into becoming advocates of homosexuality." The story goes on to quote prominent religious leaders reminding "teachers, students, and youth to beware of the well-funded gay organizations that are recruiting children into homosexuality." This is the worst coded story in 2023 and the only MMRC: 5 in this period. It platforms Uganda's most influential political and religious leaders perpetuating a diverse

array of dangerous anti-queer falsehoods with no effort to fact check their outrageous claims, resulting in a “news article” that has the tone of a fever pitched witch hunt.

In an [analysis of the 2023 bill](#) published one week after its introduction, a journalist for *The Monitor* wrote, “With allegations of rising homosexual recruitment mainly targeting students, and Mr Mukisa⁹ publicly identifying as one victim recruited from a city school at age 17, the demand for the government and educational institutions to act has grown louder.” In an [8 March 2023 interview](#), MP Asuman Basalirwa, who introduced the 2023 bill, said “the recruitment drive, the promotion, is real and it’s at its peak. That’s why I thought it fit to bring it at this time to try and address the vice.” In a 1 April 2023 [Q&A with The Monitor](#), Basalirwa said, “Locally, the position [on homosexuality] is very clear, the majority of Ugandans dislike homosexuality. It is very disgusting, abominable. You are not going to find any Ugandan taking pride in homosexuality. It’s not our culture.”

Such statements, common among bill promoters, erase the existence of queer Ugandans. When journalists fail to add relevant and adequate counter voices to their stories, as is still often the case in Uganda, these false portrayals seep into public consciousness as assumed reality.¹⁰

The most vocally dangerous homophobic politicians during this period were Speaker of Parliament Anita Among, her deputy speaker Thomas Tayebwa, MP Asuman Basalirwa (who introduced the bill), and President Museveni. Among, Tayebwa, and Basalirwa were frequently quoted saying fear-mongering falsehoods and declaring their support for the 2023 bill’s passage. Upon the 2023 bill’s introduction, Among was [quoted as saying](#), “I want to appeal to the religious leaders that this time round, we need to see who is who...You are either for homosexuality or you are against.” Among’s obviously biased support for the 2023 law is one of several constitutional avenues petitioners are pursuing as they seek to overturn it. Even before the 2023 bill was passed, lawyer Male Mabirizi [asked court to quash debate on it](#), citing Among’s bias and noting “The Speaker’s threats to MPs that whoever will vote against the Bill will be regarded as ‘homosexual’, hence a criminal, threatens citizens’ participation in affairs of government through their representatives and that [sic] the reason why the voting will be by tally¹¹ is to expose those who are ‘homosexuals’.” Upon the bill’s passage on 21 March 2023, in a neutrally reported article in *The Monitor*, [Among said](#), “This House will not shy to restrict any right to the extent of the House that recognizes, protects and safeguards the sovereignty, morals and culture of this country,” flagging three of the key values used to justify its

enactment. “This vice has persisted and the people who are suffering are our children,” Among [said](#) on 28 February 2023 as reported in *The Independent*. Also of note in this article is MP Charles Onen describing homosexuality as “an act of terror on our children”.

As in 2014, President Museveni’s language in the 2023 period was homophobic but usually less incendiary and apocalyptic than other political speakers (or the religious speakers quoted below). In a 17 February 2023 article published in *The Monitor* titled “[Museveni: Uganda won’t support homosexuality](#)” the president is quoted as saying the West should stop seeking to impose its views to compel dissenting countries to “normalise” what he called “deviations”. The author of this article goes on to say Museveni’s remarks were in response to pleas by Archbishop Kaziimba of the Church of Uganda “for the government to join the Church in condemning homosexuality and legislate against it.” On 16 March 2023, Museveni [told parliament](#), as summarized by *The Observer*, that homosexuality is “unnatural and a deviation from normal. He also accused the West of imposing its beliefs and values on the rest of the world.” ... “This deviant, is he deviant by nature or by nurture? We need a medical opinion on that. We shall discuss it thoroughly,” he added, despite having followed this exact political script and received a nonsensical “expert” opinion nine years prior during the 2014 law debate. Museveni’s rhetoric grew incendiary with allusions to war upon signing the bill, saying “people should be ready for a war. And you cannot fight a war when you are a pleasure seeker, if you like a soft life” as quoted in the uncritically reported article “[Museveni tells off anti-gay law critics](#)”, published 1 June 2023 in *The Monitor*.

The only MP to vote against the 2023 law, Fox Odoi-Oywelowo, was a rare media champion of rational, rights-based approaches to its debate and discussion. In a 19 March 2023 article titled “[AG, ministers clash over anti-gay Bill](#),” Odoi-Oywelowo is quoted pushing back against Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity Rose Akello’s baseless assertion that “foreign missions in Uganda have become hubs for harbouring people claiming to be homosexuals and those promoting the vice,” asking for the minister to provide proof: “Can we have evidence to back this up...and not one or two videos? Legislation must be evidence-based,” he said. Such calls by influential public figures for evidence in the face of baseless assertions about homosexuality and false associations with child abuse were rare in this period, as in 2014. The most in-depth and balanced procedural news report of the bill’s passage ([MPs return death penalty for gay](#), *The Monitor*, 22 March 2023) details the harassment Odoi-Oywelowo endured from colleagues in parliament while

presenting his rights- and jurisprudence-based opposition to the bill in a minority report. Such backlash may partially explain somewhat why vocal opposition was so uncommon.

The most vocally dangerous religious leader in the lead up to the 2023 law was the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda Samuel Kaziimba Mugalu, whose anti-queer and sometimes violent rhetoric was captured and analyzed in some of the worst clips from 2022 in our recent report “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022”. Kaziimba doubles as the chairperson of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) and “vowed to do everything possible to have the anti-same-sex Bill returned to Parliament, as one of the measures to tackle the spread of homosexuality, especially in schools,” according to an article published in *The Monitor* on 16 February 2023 titled “[Religious leaders to return anti-gay Bill to Parliament](#)”. In an article published the next day, Kaziimba is quoted as having said, “We have homosexuals and other vices attacking our nation...We want to call out government to be bold and come out to fight all these vices that will kill our nation.” Sometime later (date unspecified, quoted [here](#)), he said “Homosexuality is currently a challenge in Uganda because it is being forced on us by outside, foreign actors against our will, against our culture, and against our religious beliefs. ... The African way ... is a lifelong, heterosexual, monogamous marriage,” he added, apparently ignoring the existence of divorce, polygamy, and homosexuality on the continent.

On 24 February 2023, in apparent coordination with the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, [Muslim leaders held protests](#) across the country and called on mosques “to express their disagreement with homosexuality, a vice, they say, has reared its ugly head targeting, especially young people.” One spokesperson, Dr Muhammad Kiggundu advised teachers “to talk about the evil of homosexuality, which is taking out humanity.” Three months later, upon enactment of the 2023 law, “leaders of Uganda’s biggest religious denominations chorused support for President Museveni’s decision to sign the Anti-Homosexuality Act into law, saying it will safeguard indigenous cultures, morals and children,” according to a 30 May 2023 article published in *The Monitor* in which the author repeats source biases and myths without challenging their veracity. “The LGBTQI-affirming countries have shown us the negative consequences. We thank the President for not surrendering to their threats and for protecting Uganda from their paths of self-destruction,” Kaziimba noted in a statement quoted in the same article.

Pastor Moses Solomon Male, leader of the National Coalition Against Homosexuality and Sexual Abuses,

[argued against the 2023 law](#), saying it “is premised on lies, driven by populism, opportunism, and hypocrisy, and accepted by the masses because of ignorance. There are better laws in the Penal Code if they can only be enforced.” In several stories published in mid-March, including “[Drama as Ugandan pastors differ on special law against homosexuality](#),” Pastor Male serves as the primary alternative/opposition voice to the bill despite absolutely championing its anti-homosexuality aims. This journalistic “false balance” comes at the expense of including the voices of SSOIGIE/ally/human rights-based opponents.

As is often the case, the most dangerous op-eds in this period came from designated “experts” who write falsehoods or conjecture as truth. The opinions of these medical doctors, journalists, lawyers, and people of similarly respected professions carry outsized weight because casual readers often trust them as voices of authority based on their professional titles alone.

“[Homosexuality not natural, but deviation in behaviour](#)” published 22 March 2023 in *NewVision*, was written by Dr Chris Baryomunsi, a medical doctor and Uganda’s Minister of Information, Communications Technology and National Guidance. He writes “homosexuals increase in number by recruitment and promotions, and not through reproduction... Further studies have linked a history of homosexual child abuse to an adult homosexual orientation and to sexual attraction to children [no studies cited]... Our societies as black Africa, do not cherish homosexual behaviour... Uganda, and indeed other developing countries, must firmly resist the arrogant behaviour of other societies that want to impose on us these foreign behaviours... Efforts to recruit our people and promote homosexuality, including using new technologies, should be resisted.”

In the biased op-ed “[Africa too poor and weak to defeat Homosexuality](#)” (9 April 2023, *The Monitor*), a locally respected journalist writes, “Harsh economic conditions alone in Africa force young people to become homosexuals when, in fact, they are heterosexuals,” demonstrating the author’s apparent ignorance of any difference between sexual orientation and sex work.

In “[Homosexuality is an imperial cultural colonialism tool](#),” a 17 March 2023 op-ed, lawyer Hudu Hussein writes “We are on the verge of complete cultural erosion with the advent of gay rights...The West is pushing the homosexual agenda behind the veil of human rights for two reasons; the first is to strip us of our norms, values and identity in a bid to create a single culture for the entire human race so that we can be like the rest of the ‘free world’ indistinguishable from them and therefore easily

controllable; the second is to control the growth of an African population which can be a threat to the west when empowered... the vice has been commercialised and has been made contagious in our schools, offices and social places of association.”

Despite these and other net-negative op-eds, many more positive op-eds appeared in the 2023 sample than in 2014. Among these were two¹² by Dr. Muniini K Mulera who deftly corrects dangerous myths about what causes a person’s sexual orientation and advises that “so-called conversion therapy has potentially harmful physical and psychological consequences. It is inhuman, cruel, degrading and completely unjustifiable ‘treatment’ that has absolutely no place in the ethical practice of medicine, or in Christian life or civilised society in general.”

The greatest local media coverage improvement between the 2014 and 2023 periods comes from major news outlets, including *The Independent*, *The Observer*, and *The Monitor*, publishing op-eds by and quoting LGBTQI+ activists, human rights defenders, and allies including MP Fox Odoi-Oywelowo (quoted above), a human rights lawyer¹³ and journalist Andrew Mwenda¹⁴ as counter voices to homophobic fear mongering by political and religious leaders. In a 19 February 2023 op-ed in *The Monitor* titled “[It’s wrong to radicalise Ugandans into oppressing queer folks](#),” the author correctly notes that “mainstream and social media have been awash with homophobic cries with calls from both the political and religious leaders...The impact and calculation of this talk, much as it is masked and wrapped in saving the children mantra is to return the anti-gay legislation.” Platforming more queer and ally counter voices can be an effective antidote to this tsunami of fear mongering homophobic rhetoric.

Given uncertainty around the 2023 law’s “promotion” provisions, it is noteworthy that both *The Observer* ([here](#), 9 June 2023) and *The Monitor* ([here](#), 10 June 2023) reported accurately and somewhat glowingly about the author winning the 2023 Freedom Award from Rainbow Railroad “at an event where Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged more support and opened doors for LGBTQ people around the world including Uganda” only one week after the 2023 law went into effect.

The strongest positive op-ed in this period was “[Open Letter to President Museveni from mothers of LGBTQ+ individuals](#)” published 28 March 2023 in *The Monitor*. The letter, signed by eight mothers, begins, “It is our understanding that the Anti-gay rhetoric and messaging is targeted to demean and dehumanize our children, even as it is disguised as a form of protection of children from ‘recruitment’ and a morality war” and goes on to document the horrific experience of fearing for their children’s lives amid this latest groundswell of hate

speech. The letter uses simple, accessible language and discusses the mothers’ journeys to support their queer children. It personally and emotionally taps into key values and narrative frames, appealing to other parents and Ugandans for compassion: “Our children are not any of the derogatory names they have been tethered with; our children are not criminals or anti-government. Our children are more than their sexuality and gender identity. Our children are Ugandan citizens, just like you and me! Our children are outstanding citizens of this great nation, and valuable contributors to this country. Our children are your neighbors, employers, educators, casual laborers and employees, government officials, legislators, and local leaders. Our children are ingrained in every facet of the Ugandan Society. They are part of the beating heart of Uganda: Our blood and future.”

In a rare and effective use of statistics to challenge dominant fear-based and evidence-poor narratives, journalist Daniel K Kalinaki writes¹⁵, “Out of the 12,780 ‘defilement’ cases reported to the police last year, 12,470 victims were female, while 310 were male. One way of interpreting this is to suggest that the lesbians are on rampage. More accurately, however, is that most of the sexual assault of minors in Uganda reported to the police is of the heterosexual variety and involves men preying on young girls.” Given the anti-homosexuality proponents’ complete lack of evidence for their fearmongering assertions, the analysis and distribution of relevant statistics like this can be an effective means of correcting false narratives.

In this 2023 media sample, several articles accurately covered petitions to scrap the bill or overturn the law on constitutional grounds^{16 17}. [Anti-gay petition hit by withdraw glitches](#), published 1 June 2023 in *The Monitor*, outlines the chaotic scenario that led MP Odoi-Oywelowo and SMUG’s executive director to withdraw their names from a petition filed by Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) and their legal team. The story is neutrally reported, but nevertheless represents “bad press” for pro-equality advocates, though the blame seems to be on their lawyers. This public dispute undermines anti-bill advocates’ credibility as a unified, organized, competent front and would have been better managed and resolved privately before the petition was filed.

Other notable reporting themes/topics surrounding the 2023 law during this period focused on international condemnation of the bill/law¹⁸ and Ugandan politicians chastising foreign powers¹⁹, the prospect of foreign aid cuts²⁰, technical/procedural elements of its passage, and allegations that the 2023 law was politically motivated to retaliate against a European Parliament resolution against the development of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline²¹.

Comparative Media Analysis: 2014 vs. 2023

In an interview for this report, SMUG representatives say the 2014 and 2023 laws were both “pushed by [domestic and foreign] religious fundamentalists and politicians” and ostensibly “premised on similar values and motivations, including the protection of the traditional family and combating what they have continuously regarded as recruitment of children into homosexuality.”

A representative of a local arts and advocacy group said that in 2014, several (unnamed) Ugandan media organizations and journalists publicly supported the Anti-Homosexuality Law. They often portrayed homosexuality as a foreign influence that threatened Ugandan values and culture. These media outlets disseminated narratives that justified the legislation by emphasizing the importance of preserving traditional family structures and defending Uganda's moral fabric. The group adds that a few media houses, including NTV, which is part of the large private regional media network Nation Media Group, produced balanced reporting and followed legal proceedings until the 2014 law was repealed on procedural grounds in August 2014. “This time we see journalists staying away from involving their personal prejudices in this issue. There is a column in *The Monitor* that freelance journalists have been contributing to, and the opinions are actually against this bill. A number of independent blogs have also come up and are reporting about these issues in a balanced manner,” one of the group’s representatives said of the 2023 period.

SMUG reports that for both laws, news media coverage and headlines prominently featured statements made by religious leaders and politicians, “who hold a strong sway on the lives of the common Ugandan”.

348 MPs voted to pass the 2023 law and only one (Fox Odoi-Oywelowo of the ruling NRM party) voted against it (208 MPs were absent). As political and religious leaders vocally perpetuated false negative narratives, the tone of statements from these influential sources in local media coverage was overwhelmingly negative. Despite this preponderance of negative source statements, SMUG asserts that local news media coverage has improved significantly since the 2014 period: “The difference with 2023 is an increased media presence of a dissenting narrative against the law.” Comparative media analysis of news clips surrounding the passage of each law confirms this assertion. Coded stories with overall positive source statements rose from 6 to 9 (+50%) between

the 2014 to 2023 periods. Much of this improvement can be attributed to a 200% rise in media clips that feature Local Q+A CSO/NGO representatives as sources (from 3 to 9) and dominant sources (from 2 to 6).

Whereas local news media outlets consistently referred to the 2014 law as “Kill the Gays²²”, which “nurtured a hostile audience”, local journalists exhibited more professionalism in 2023, consistently using the bill/law’s official name, according to SMUG. Without excusing their contributions to violations against LGBTQ persons, SMUG said local news outlets have played “a key role in driving the sentiment of the general community, which has altogether been less violent than it was 10 years ago.”

Thematically, compared to 2014, SMUG says (and this research confirms) that news media coverage in 2023 has overwhelmingly focused on religious leaders’ and politicians’ false claims of “homosexual recruitment” of children in schools. Although mentioned in 11 clips from the 2014 period, child abuse/recruitment was a dominant theme in only one of those clips. This compares to 16 clip mentions in 2023, and 11 clips in which it was a dominant theme (representing a 1,000% increase, the largest numeric and percentage change of any metric tracked between the two reporting periods).

SMUG cites several examples of politicians and religious leaders adopting this potent fearmongering approach, including this [NTV Uganda news report](#) of religious leaders cautioning youth “not to be lured into homosexuality with promises of money.”

While this “youth recruitment” narrative has no doubt fanned the flames of violent homophobia in 2023, SMUG says journalistic coverage was more biased and demeaning of LGBTQ persons in 2014 and used more sensational and violence-inciting headlines surrounding the 2014 law²³. Whereas around the 2014 law “media reasserted religious leaders’ claims that homosexuality is evil and ungodly, over time the media seems to have understood that homosexuals are human,” SMUG added, implying improvements around coverage of the 2023 law. Evidence of this humanization may be found in the aforementioned increase in Local Q+A CSO/NGO representatives as sources in media reporting and op-eds.

SMUG says the 2023 law’s vague “promotion of homosexuality” prohibition has left media outlets “treading as if on broken glass for fear of being labeled homosexualists or promoters

of homosexuality”. No journalist spoken to for this report mentioned a climate of fear in newsrooms around the 2023 law. News outlets have covered the bill’s aftermath (including petitions against it) and some privately owned outlets have even published positive profiles of SMUG’s executive director and op-eds written by him since its passing. Further comparative research, perhaps after one year, should be conducted in the future to determine the prevalence and effect of such self-censorship fears on local news coverage.

SMUG says independent private newspapers including *The Observer* and *Monitor* have provided the most sensitive, objective, ethical, and human-rights oriented coverage of LGBTQ persons’ lived realities when reporting on the 2023 law whereas religious- and government-owned or -leaning media have reported with more bias and hostility against queer people, leaving little to no room for diverse editorial perspectives.

While this report primarily analyzes locally produced English language print and online news media coverage of both bills, SMUG correctly notes that radio remains a critical news source for many Ugandans, particularly in rural environments, and that some stations have reportedly escalated violence against LGBTQ people. According to SMUG, Busoga One, a popular FM radio station in Jinja, incited the attack and consequent arrest of a lesbian teacher at a local girls’ school. Reports of radio stations outing queer people have also been received in Gulu (Northern Uganda) and other regions, according to SMUG.

Beyond the scope of this report, SMUG characterizes social media in Uganda as a double-edged sword that often influences news media coverage. “Despite a growing LGBTQ social media presence in Uganda, there is an unmissable wave of homophobic rhetoric as well. This has been greatly hyped and spread like wildfire all over the media. The national media is having a hard time dissociating and distancing from the rising era of fake news.” SMUG says this problem of fake news is compounded by media houses not effectively employing fact checkers before airing or releasing news. “Many fake stories have been aired against the Ugandan LGBTQ community by so-called ex-gays²⁴, which has stirred homophobia inspired by sheer ignorance and nonfactual bases.”

Journalists surveyed for this report affirm most of above assessments and provide additional insight to better understand the inner workings of Uganda’s media sector.

One radio and print journalist who works in Eastern Uganda and who participated in a multi-day LGBTQ+ reporting work-

shop for Kenyan and Ugandan journalists several years ago hosted by Thomson Reuters Foundation and Hivos said:

“Most local media outlets perpetuate harmful stereotypes, spread misinformation, and encourage prejudice against LGBTQ+ individuals. Negative and irresponsible media coverage hinders efforts for LGBTQ+ rights and acceptance and contributes to a hostile environment that has led to arrests, forced exile, and even mob killings of LGBTQ+ community members including David Kato (who was murdered in January 2011).”

“Despite the introduction of the new law, there have been instances of Ugandan media outlets and journalists working to provide fair and balanced reporting on LGBTQ+ issues, highlighting the challenges queer individuals face, and promoting dialogue on the subject.”

“Some media organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and amplifying the voices and experiences of the queer community. Meanwhile, a few media houses including the state-owned outlets, still deploy the blackout technique on LGBTQ+ stories until there is an overriding development such as if the head of state or his cabinet minister discuss the subject in public conversations.”

“This is why local media has been underwhelming in reporting investigative queer stories, instead choosing to tell [of] the LGBTQ+ through the sentiments of the political class, religious leaders and opinion leaders.”

A Ugandan journalist who participated in Taboom Media’s regional sensitization workshop said:

“In 2014, politicians spearheaded and were more vocal about the law, whereas in 2023, religious leaders (particularly Christian leaders) have been more vocal in pushing for it. Their statements have mostly referred to homosexuality as biblically unacceptable while also citing African traditions and values around sexual relations and marriage. Politicians have also been vocal this time around, but religious leaders seem to have gained more media attention.”

“Government-owned media organizations are still very sensitive and selective when it comes to covering LGBTQI stories. They only tell queer stories from a political angle, like if it’s being discussed in parliament or the president is talking about queerness. With independent/private media, there is a slow shift towards covering LGBTQI stories with a bit more dignity. Previous headlines such as “Hang Them” or lists of “top homos” are no longer part of the media narrative. Some private media organizations try to tell balanced stories, especially based on human rights angles. It seems a bit more balanced.”

I would say there is a slight improvement from ten years ago. We still have a long way to go, but I see a shift, especially with regards to reduced hate speech, which some media organizations in Uganda used as a tool to write about homosexuality around the 2014 law. Now the language/diction has toned a bit down.”

A freelance journalist who participated one of Religion News Foundation’s regional sensitization workshop added:

“Comparing the 2014 law to 2023, there has been a notable shift in media coverage surrounding LGBTQ individuals in Uganda. Over the years, the LGBTQ community has become more open, visible in social circles, and outgoing.

The laws have, in fact, shed a more detailed visibility on LGBTQ people than ever before, even unearthing details about the country's former kings who were gay. This exposure challenges the narrative that attempts to label LGBTQ identities as foreign, as it becomes evident that even their own ancestry included non-heteronormative individuals. By highlighting the historical presence of LGBTQ individuals within Ugandan culture, it becomes increasingly difficult for detractors to dismiss LGBTQ rights as an external influence.”

The Impact of Media Trainings on LGBTQ+ News Coverage in Uganda

As part of this research, local partners and relevant media professionals were asked: *“In the past decade, how have media sensitization trainings for journalists and media advocacy capacity building trainings for human rights defenders affected the quality of national media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues? Are you seeing improvements or deterioration in news media coverage of queer issues compared to 10 years ago? In short, are media trainings with journalists and human rights defenders making a difference (positively or negatively)?”*

LGBTQ+ rights groups, human rights defenders, media trainers, and trained journalists who responded to these questions were unanimous in their view that such trainings have improved local news media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues²⁶.

Ugandan journalists who have been trained in recent years provided additional insight.

The radio and print journalist cited above who works in Eastern Uganda and who participated in a multi-day LGBTQ+ reporting workshop for Kenyan and Ugandan journalists hosted by Thomson Reuters Foundation and Hivos said:

“In 2014, there were instances of media outlets in Uganda reporting negatively on queer individuals and promoting discriminatory attitudes. Thanks to subsequent media trainings, there has been noteworthy improvement among Ugandan media outlets and journalists. Media sensitization has helped build the capacity of the media industry and educated them on their role of neutrally helping communities understand [LGBTIQ+ issues].

A gap is widening between Kampala-based media practitioners who are increasingly sensitized to LGBTQI+ issues and their upcountry peers due to limited training opportunities at the countryside.

To summarize, media trainings have played a significant role in shaping the mindset of writers, editors, and media owners, but local media in small cities and towns across the country still need to be tapped to motivate the media further to constructively tell stories about LGBTIQ+ and other minority rights. There is a need to create specific awards that will drive them to produce comprehensive coverage.”

The journalist cited above who participated in one of Taboom Media’s regional sensitization workshop said:

“In 2014, there was less understanding about LGBTQI+ issues as opposed to now. Many journalists in Uganda have been trained to know how to report and broadcast such issues in their respective media outlets and have since made people understand that we have various groups of people within our societies who still need to enjoy their rights. This time around, newspaper articles articulated these issues well, helping the audience to better understand.

In 2023, at some media outlets, there has been professional handling of this subject in ways that has not demonized people. Particularly among legacy/traditional media, many of their journalists have been trained to write without demonizing people as opposed to online media and bloggers who have benefited less from media training on SRHR, human rights, and minority groups.

Many journalists at traditional media outlets have been trained by both local and international organizations such as African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) and the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CEHURD), to name but two. As a result, there has been great improvement in news coverage of queer issues in Uganda, particularly by legacy media and also on radio talk shows. Panelists seem to have been informed and educated to tell the people the truth that we have queer people within our societies who in fact need to be accepted rather than banished or demonised. 10 years ago, many people did not know about these issues, but now a larger chunk of the population has come to realize the truth that we have minority groups of people living in our communities.

From a human rights perspective, media training in Uganda with journalists, human rights defenders, and religious leaders are making a tremendous (positive) difference. Education, sensitisation, and information sharing is being done in most regions of Uganda, which has helped to create awareness in the country about the minority groups.”

The Freelance journalist cited above who participated in Religion News Foundation’s regional sensitization workshop said:

“The media trainings provided to journalists have played a significant role in sensitizing them to the importance of fair and unbiased coverage of the LGBTQ community. As a result of these workshops, it is less likely for any media outlet in Uganda to describe the LGBTQ community using derogatory

language as they did before. Editors and reporters now adhere to professional standards and possess a better understanding of what is acceptable and what is not.

Moreover, the efforts made by journalists have contributed to improving the general public's perception of LGBTQ individuals. Many intellectuals in Uganda now recognize that the LGBTQ community has rights that should be safeguarded, though there are still fearmongers within the government and legislature.

It is crucial that we continue these efforts to train journalists and promote unbiased media coverage in order to build a more inclusive and tolerant society. The positive changes we have witnessed demonstrate that things are indeed improving. It is through education, awareness, and dialogue that we can challenge discriminatory beliefs and foster a more accepting environment for all individuals. Together, we can create lasting change and work towards a more equitable future.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although traditional media representation of LGBTQ people improved between the 2014 and 2023 periods, Ugandan politicians and religious leaders still managed to successfully spread dangerous falsehoods about homosexuality in particular, and gender and sexual diversity more broadly, via traditional and social²⁷ media channels in the 2023 period. This disinformation campaign facilitated the enactment of dangerous legislation based on falsehoods that is already negatively impacting queer communities across the country.

With the support of powerful political and religious leaders, and through fear-based stories spread by “ex-gay” and homophobic activists, the anti-homosexuality movement successfully identified and deployed “child abuse/recruitment” as the dominant narrative in the 2023 period, defining the problem (homosexuals) and the solution (draconian criminalization) and codifying it into law.

Given the outsized emotional potency of these child-related points of attack, global and local activists should prioritize factchecking, correcting, and countering such narratives with accurate information. This strategy should include exposing fraudulent claims²⁸, commissioning and conducting authoritative research where gaps exist, and spreading accurate information via social and traditional media. Media clips collected in this study show the double standards local journalists hold queer activists to—demanding evidence for our claims while reprinting the opposition’s dangerous homophobic lies without scrutiny. We must rise to these standards, unfair as they may be, to dismantle queerphobic disinformation.

To help overturn Uganda’s 2023 law and prevent similar Anti-Homosexuality Acts from being enacted elsewhere in East Africa, ethical journalists and human rights defenders should work to fight disinformation and queer erasure campaigns with 1) accurate information and 2) humanizing portrayals of queer people’s lived realities and how the 2023 law is negatively affecting them.

Not a single locally produced news story coded in either the 2014 period or 2023 period included a local non-CSO/-official/-expert queer person as a source. This total absence of everyday queer voices in local media coverage reinforces queer erasure and the false myth that homosexuality is “unAfrican” and funded by Western governments. While speaking to journalists can be a daunting and dangerous

prospect for queer people in Uganda, we need to find ways to safely include their voices in news media coverage. Prominent local and regional allies and queer activists may be well placed to tell and amplify real human stories, anonymized for safety where relevant. While statistical reports like [the one HRAPF published in July 2023](#) are vital in terms of gathering and disseminating accurate information, such reports contain anonymous cases of violence. What we need to spread are personal human stories that can be used to soften hearts and minds.

The most powerful media clip across the 2014 and 2023 periods, the [“Open Letter to President Museveni from mothers of LGBTQ+ individuals”](#) written by eight mothers and published in *The Monitor* in March 2023, chipped away at the opposition’s dominant narrative by platforming well-placed allies. The op-ed details their relatable journey to support and counters false hate-based narratives using simple, personal, humanizing stories of love, affirmation, and acceptance.

Although this report found more Q+A CSO/NGO representatives and ally voices appearing in local news media coverage as sources and publishing op-eds in the 2023 period—a notable achievement worth celebrating and one that no doubt contributed to overall media representation improvements—these net-positive media appearances also represent missed opportunities. Local experts cited in this report said journalist sensitization trainings are proving effective and should be expanded to include more journalists working in TV and radio and in cities beyond Kampala. While journalist trainings remain critical to improving public discourse, capacitating and supporting queer people to tell their own stories via traditional media (in op-eds, as interview subjects, and the like) gives activists more power in controlling the narrative and is a potentially more efficient path to changing hearts and minds.

Beyond the courtroom, the best way to counter dangerous queerphobic hate speech in Uganda will be to offset it with the sort of affirming speech evident in the mothers’ op-ed. Queer and ally voices already engaging in public discourse should be supported to do so more effectively, and more strategic voices should be safely identified and capacitated to do the same, whether from within Uganda and/or in the diaspora.

Methodology

Overview

This media scan includes 60 fully coded news media clips, 30 from the 2014 period and 30 from the 2023 period.

For media analysis of the 2014 law (the 2014 period), I collected 35 clips, including news articles and op-eds, published between 1 December 2013 to 31 August 2014 that provide comprehensive coverage of national English language media reporting of the law. I then collected 10 relevant clips from 1 October 2009 - 1 Dec 2013, covering the law's origins and entire life cycle. I collected an additional 10 clips from physical newspapers and tabloids including Red Pepper and Hello! from an archive maintained by SMUG. After reading and analyzing these clips, I coded a representative sample of 30. See: [Arcus 2023 Uganda Media Analysis Sheet FINAL \("2014 Law" tab\)](#).

For media analysis of the 2023 law (the 2023 period), I collected and analyzed 78 clips published between 1 January and 15 June 2023 that provide comprehensive coverage of national English language media reporting of the 2023 law's current life cycle. After reading and analyzing these clips, I coded a representative sample of 30. See: [Arcus 2023 Uganda Media Analysis Sheet FINAL \("2023 Law" tab\)](#). For additional context, I reviewed 30 broader LGBTQI+-related clips from Ugandan media that were coded for the report "Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022". These clips were published between 1 July 2021 and 31 December 2022.

The 60 coded clips in this report mostly consist of online and print English-language text stories, with a few TV stories in the mix. Most clips are reported news and feature stories, with some op-eds included. International news wire stories were excluded from the scan. Stories produced by progressive or LGBTQI+ community publications were excluded except when republished in mainstream news outlets.

Collection and Coding

This study began with preliminary emails and interviews with media monitoring partners and activist organizations in Uganda.

Efforts were made to liaise with Ugandan LGBTQI+ organizations, particularly those that are current Arcus partners/grant recipients, along with relevant media training organizations and trained journalists. Partners were asked to send relevant media clips they had already collected about each Anti-Homosexuality Act and to share their perspectives on key indicators. These engagements were also used to determine which media outlets the study should prioritize and which relevant local keywords should be scanned as well as to gather partners' general impressions of LGBTQI+ media coverage in the country.

After determining priority news outlets (based primarily on circulation, reach, and influence), keyword media searches were conducted using Google News Search, Google Web Search (which included website-specific searches of each priority news outlet), PressReader, and Dow Jones Factiva. Advanced searches surfaced the most relevant stories based on each service's algorithm from within the period under study. Stories from international news wires, duplicate stories, and very short or unremarkable briefs were eliminated to collect the most relevant clips for coding from each period. Exhaustive scans would have been infeasible given this project's time constraints. Therefore, this study necessarily depended on search-engine algorithms to surface the most relevant and representative samples and clips.

MMRC Rating

For the purpose of this study, which focuses primarily on coverage tone and source statement tone (which includes direct quotes, op-eds, and other material attributed to a source), story quality ratings are modeled on Taboom Media's [Media Monitoring and Response Coalition](#) 5-point scale. Put simply, this scale is used to determine whether news stories are: 1 = Excellent, 2 = Mostly Good, 3 = Fair or Mixed, 4 = Poor/Problematic, 5 = Terrible/Dangerous.

A "mixed" story might receive a rating of 3 when its coverage tone and quotes significantly and evenly diverge (one positive,

the other negative). Ratings of 1 and 5 are reserved for extraordinary circumstances.

The numeric rating largely indicates the clip’s overall tone. We can also think of these numeric ratings as indicating:

1. Excellent stories we should champion and highlight
2. Stories that are generally positive but have minor problematic issues we would like to see improved in future reporting
3. Stories that may be incomplete, contain errors, feature improperly weighted negative voices, and so on. They are in the middle.
4. Stories that do more harm than good. They contain significant flaws.
5. The most dangerous or egregious stories.

The average MMRC rating for clips from each period may shine some light on the general state of coverage with regard to LGBTQI+-related attitudes.

Tone Matrices

In order to determine a clip’s overall coverage tone and source statements tone, it was necessary to identify several relevant indicators. The following two rationale frameworks were adapted from the peer-reviewed Gender Links paper, “A snapshot of LGBT media coverage in East, West and Southern Africa.” If a clip contained indicators from more than one column, the clip was assigned the most appropriate rating, considering the story’s overall tone, author’s presumed intent, balance of source statements, and so on. If an indicator category was irrelevant to or absent from a story (if the story had no visuals/photos, for example), the category was ignored. These same matrices were used in “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022” and prior Arcus Foundation reports.

Coverage Tone Matrix		
Positive/Neutral Coverage	Incomplete Coverage	Negative Coverage
Includes sufficient LGBTQI+ and ally voices	Includes insufficient LGBTQI+ and ally voices	Includes zero LGBTQI+ or ally voices
Challenges negative myths/stereotypes	Repeats myths/stereotypes without adequate interrogation	Perpetuates negative myths/stereotypes
Has a fair, balanced and objective approach	Has an objective approach but unjust weighting of sources or information	Displays clear bias, moralizing, fearmongering, sensationalizing, prejudice, ridicule, and so on
Uses accessible language	Uses inaccurate or inadequate explanation of terms/jargon	Uses stereotypical, biased, dog-whistle language
Uses accurate and inclusive terminology	Misuses terms but with no apparent malice	Uses discriminatory or dehumanizing terms
Includes accurate factual research, history, or context	Relies on insufficient or questionable research, history, or context	Uses false or only negative research, history, or context
Takes source safety seriously (anonymity, etc.)	Inadequately addresses or acknowledges source safety	Shows dangerous or deliberate disregard for source safety
Uses relevant affirming visuals/photos	Uses generic (rainbow flag-type) visuals/photos	Uses demonizing visuals/photos

Source Statements Tone Matrix		
Positive Statements	Neutral Statements	Negative Statements
Includes sufficient LGBTQI+ and ally voices	Includes insufficient LGBTQI+ and ally voices	Includes zero LGBTQI+ or ally voices
Challenges negative myths/stereotypes	Repeats myths/stereotypes without interrogation	Perpetuates negative myths/stereotypes
Uses accessible/affirming language	Provides clear/generic statements of situational facts	Uses stereotypical, biased, dog-whistle language
Properly uses accurate, inclusive terms	Misuses terms but with no apparent malice	Uses discriminatory or dehumanizing terms
Cites accurate factual research, history, or context	Cites insufficient or questionable research, history, or context	Cites false or only negative research, history, or context

Findings and Tables

MMRC Rating

Although 30 coded clips for each period is a small sample from which to draw statistically significant conclusions, the general impression of each period’s coverage, as confirmed with human rights defenders and veteran journalists in Uganda and from further insight gleaned from our “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022” report, match the average MMRC rating results.

Comparing news media coverage surrounding the 2014 law to that of the 2023 law, overall media representation of LGBTQ people improved by 7.1%, according to average Media Monitoring and Response Coalition (MMRC) rating, our most comprehensive indicator, which improved from 2.83 to 2.63 (the lower the MMRC rating, the better the coverage).

The number of stories rated “Excellent” (MMRC: 1) or “Mostly Good” (MMRC: 2) increased from 12 to 15 (25% improvement), and the number of stories rated “Poor/Problematic” (MMRC: 4) or “Terrible/Dangerous” (MMRC: 5) decreased from 9 to 8 (11.1% improvement), demonstrating improvement at both ends of the coverage spectrum.

For reference (but not for comparison), Uganda’s MMRC rating for the 2017-2018 period was 3.07, and for the 2021-2022 period was 3.30 (as reported in [“Media Representation of LGBTQ People in Africa”](#) and [“Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022,”](#) respectively). Those two reports focused on LGBTQI+ coverage broadly, whereas this report and media clips captured and coded focus more specifically on the 2014 and 2023 laws.

In our “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022” report, noteworthy deterioration in LGBTQI+ media coverage in Uganda between 2017-18 and 2021-2022 was attributed to a spike in dangerous news coverage in late-2022 featuring hateful remarks by Archbishop Kaziimba. Local activists say these remarks significantly contributed to the “child recruitment” myths and climate of fear and panic that influenced the 2023 law’s final text and media coverage.

Average MMRC Rating (1-5)	
	AVERAGE
2014	2.83
2023	2.63
% Change	-7.1%

Number of Stories by MMRC Rating			
	2014	2023	% Change
ONE	2	5	+150%
TWO	10	10	0%
THREE	9	7	-22%
FOUR	5	7	+40%
FIVE	4	1	-75%

Overall Coverage Tone

Comparing overall coverage tone between the two periods surveyed shows little change, with just one fewer “negative” story in 2023. Given that this report focuses primarily on journalistic coverage of laws, such reporting is typically quite procedural, perhaps making it more immune to the insertion of author bias than might be found in a broader sampling of stories about a diverse range of LGBTQ+ issues. In legal reporting, journalists understandably prioritize the voices of lawmakers and government officials who have the power to draft and enact laws. Most stories in this sample quote the same lawmakers saying similar things from one week to the next. When the overwhelming majority of voting lawmakers support unjust anti-human rights policies, as was the case in both 2014 and 2023, similar coverage tone results are to be expected. A more significant indicator of change in this context may then be source statement tone and type of sources cited.

Overall Coverage Tone			
	2014	2023	% Change
Positive/Neutral	13	13	0%
Incomplete/Mixed	8	9	+12.5%
Negative	9	8	-11.1%

Overall Source Statements Tone and Source Type

Rather than coding each individual source statement in a story, clips were analyzed and coded based on the overall effect of all source statements contained therein. For example, if a story contained two sources, one saying moderately LGBTQI+-affirming statements, one saying moderately LGBTQI+-rejecting/phobic statements, the overall source statements tone would be coded “Neutral/Mixed” for that clip. In another scenario, if the story included one source saying only slightly LGBTQI+-affirming statements and the other saying dangerously LGBTQI+-rejecting/phobic statements, the overall source statements tone would be coded “Negative”. This methodology precludes us from providing precise numbers of positive or negative statements across the entire survey. We did, however, capture the types of sources quoted or cited in each story.

For overall source statements tone between the two periods surveyed, stories with net-positive source statements increased from 6 to 9 (50% improvement), stories with neutral or mixed (some positive, some negative) source statements dropped from 11 to 10 (9% change), and stories with net-negative source statements decreased from 13 to 11 (15% improvement).

In our “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022” report, Uganda was the only African country to have a majority of source statements coded as net-negative in tone. The fact that a plurality of statements rather than an outright majority were net-negative in 2014 and 2023 may be due to the more legal/procedural nature of coverage in this report, which although often negative includes more room for neutral and counter (sometimes positive) statements that when balanced against negative statements in a story result in net-neutral/mixed statement tone.

As indicated by the type of sources cited, this improvement in overall source statements tone can be largely attributed to a 200% rise in media clips that include local SSOGIE/LGBTQI+ Sources (from 3 to 9) and local Q+A CSO/NGO representatives as sources (from 3 to 9) and dominant sources (from 2 to 6). Quoting and platforming (in the form of op-eds) SSOGIE minority/LGBTQI+ sources offers audiences nuanced perspectives, lived reality narratives, and important sensitization and fact-checking, all of which improve coverage.

Whereas President Museveni remained a common source in 2023, his narrative dominance was largely replaced by other government officials in stories, most notably Speaker of Parliament Anita Among, her deputy speaker Thomas Tayebwa, and MP Asuman Basalirwa who introduced the 2023 bill.

Overall Source Statements Tone			
	2014	2023	% Change
Positive	6	9	+50%
Neutral/Mixed	11	10	-9%
Negative	13	11	-15%

Inclusion of Local SSOGIE/LGBTQI+ Sources			
	2014	2023	% Change
Yes	3	9	+200%
No	27	21	-22%

Type of Sources Cited			
	2014	2023	% Change
President Museveni	13	9	-31%
Other UG gov (MPs, Ministers, etc.)	15	19	27%
Local faith/ religious leaders	9	7	-22%
Local lawyers/ legal experts / academics	8	7	-12.5%
Local Q+A CSO/NGO reps	3	9	+200%
Local Q+ person (non-CSO/official/expert)	0	0	0%
medical / psych / therapist / "scientists"	4	2	-50%
International agency/Foreign government / activists	9	9	0%
Journalist / letter to editor from "citizen" (w/o other affiliation)	6	4	-33%

Dominant Sources Cited			
	2014	2023	% Change
President Museveni	7	1	-86%
Other UG gov (MPs, Ministers, etc.)	8	14	75%
Local faith/ religious leaders	4	4	0%
Local lawyers/ legal experts / academics	6	3	-50%
Local Q+A CSO/NGO reps	2	6	+200%
Local Q+ person (non-CSO/official/expert)	0	0	0%
medical / psych / therapist / "scientists"	1	2	+100%
International agency/Foreign government / activists	2	4	+100%
Journalist / letter to editor from "citizen" (w/o other affiliation)	2	3	+50%

Thematic Reporting Emphasis

To determine thematic reporting emphasis, I started with the myths/topics that SMUG cited in its 2014 report titled [Expanded Criminalisation of Homosexuality in Uganda: A Flawed Narrative](#) (discussed above in the [Media Coverage Analysis of the 2014 Law](#) section) and expanded and added to these topics as different themes emerged upon initial review of the collected clips before coding. In each story, one or two dominant themes emerged, which were duly noted. Stories that attempt to dismantle a particular myth typically mention or allude to its underlying theme in order to do so. As a result, it should be noted that not every occurrence of a negative theme means that its treatment within the clip was negative.

Comparing 2014 to 2023, the notion that homosexuality is “unAfrican / western / colonial / alien / a threat to Uganda’s sovereignty / a mercenary ploy/ or the result of economic hardship subsidized by foreign entities” remained the

most commonly cited or alluded to theme across both periods. The largest change in thematic mentions between 2014 and 2023 pertained to discussions around whether homosexuality is a result of nature or nurture and whether it can be altered through so-called conversion therapy (up from 4 to 11, +175%), discussions around traditional family (up from 6 to 15, 150%), discussions around human rights (up from 10 to 17, +70%) and discussions around homosexuality as it relates to children, with particular emphasis on abuse and myths around “recruitment” (up from 11 to 16, +45.5%). In terms of dominant themes, news media coverage in 2023 overwhelmingly focused on religious leaders’ and politicians’ false claims of “homosexual recruitment” of children in schools. Although mentioned in 11 clips from the 2014 period, child abuse/recruitment was a dominant theme in only one of those clips. This compares to 16 clip mentions in 2023, and 11 clips in which it was a dominant theme (representing a 1,000% increase, the largest numeric and percentage change of any metric tracked between the two reporting periods).

Thematic Reporting Emphasis			
	2014	2023	% Change
UnAfrican / West / Colonial / Alien / Sovereignty / Mercenary/economic	22	23	+4.5%
Mutable Mental Disorder / Nurture (not nature) deviation	4	11	+175%
Traditional Family	6	15	+150%
Religion (ungodly)	9	11	+22%
Morality (amoral, "vice")	11	13	+18%
(Prevent) HIV	4	5	+25%
(Prevent) child abuse/ recruitment	11	16	+45.5%
"Special" gay/homo rights/ privileges	4	0	-100%
Disgust	3	1	-67%
Human Rights	10	17	+70%
Constitutionality / Legality / Procedural	12	13	+8%

Dominant Thematic Reporting Emphasis			
	2014	2023	% Change
UnAfrican / West / Colonial / Alien / Sovereignty / Mercenary/economic	8	8	0%
Mutable Mental Disorder / Nurture (not nature) deviation	2	2	0%
Traditional Family	0	0	0%
Religion (ungodly)	3	1	-67%
Morality (amoral, "vice")	2	1	-50%
(Prevent) HIV	0	1	+100%
(Prevent) child abuse/ recruitment	1	11	+1000%
"Special" gay/homo rights/ privileges	1	0	-100%
Disgust	0	1	+100%
Human Rights	4	5	+25%
Constitutionality / Legality / Procedural	8	9	+12.5%

¹ See: [PDF of final 2014 law text](#).

² One-third of all members entitled to vote must be present in the house.

³ See: [PDF of signed final 2023 law text](#).

⁴ The bill as introduced contained the death penalty for this offence, hence it becoming known as “Kill the Gays” bill. This was reduced to life imprisonment in later drafts before enactment.

⁵ See: [Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2023: No Basis in Evidence](#), published by The Williams Institute in April 2023, which discusses how these and other assertions used to justify the bill have no basis in evidence.

⁶ Arcus Foundation Report written by Brian Pellot and Patrick Welsh in early 2023.

⁷ Though “(traditional) family”, or more specifically “the traditional African family unit” was referenced in only 6 coded clips in the 2014 period, it is no doubt baked into several of these other myths.

⁸ Coupled with reference to morality

⁹ For context, see: [Curious case of Mukisa: A victim or blackmailer?](#) Published 23 October 2022 in *The Monitor*. This story, and further context around Mukisa, can be found in “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022”.

¹⁰ See similarly unbalanced reporting in “[Clerics praise Museveni for signing anti-gay law](#),” published 30 May 2023 in *The Monitor*.

¹¹ In the end, the voting was not by tally, a procedural change Among did not explain to publicly at the time.

¹² See: “[Homosexuality: A medical doctor’s perspective](#)” 11 April 2023 in *The Monitor*, which is excellent, and [Homosexuality: Ugandan scientific research needed](#), 25 April 2023 in *The Monitor*, which is good.

¹³ See: 16 March 2023 article/video “[Academics raise concerns about proposed Anti-Gay Bill](#)” and [here](#) where the situation in Uganda is compared to [McCarthyism](#).

¹⁴ See: I’ll go to court if Museveni signs Anti- gay law - Mwenda, *The Monitor*, 24 March 2023.

¹⁵ See: [Uganda has a sex crime problem, but gays are just easy scapegoats](#), *The Monitor*, 2 March 2023.

¹⁶ See: [Activists to petition court after being overlooked in anti-gay law](#), *The Obersever*, 24 March 2023.

¹⁷ See: [Mwenda, MP Odoi and nine others ask court to block implementation of anti-gay law](#), *The Monitor*, 29 May 2023.

¹⁸ See: [Amnesty International asks President Museveni to veto Anti-Homosexuality Bill](#), *The Independent*, 22 March 2023; [White House, EU join in condemning passed Uganda’s anti-gay law](#), *The Monitor*, 23 March 2023; and [World Bank closely monitoring progress on anti-gay legislation](#), *The Monitor*, 1 May 2023 – all reported in a factual, objective tone.

¹⁹ See: [MPs tell America off in battle over anti-gay law](#), *The Monitor*, 28 April 2023.

²⁰ See: “[US targets Aids cash cut over anti-gay law](#)”, *The Monitor*, 27 April 2023.

²¹ See: [Gay bill passed to hit USA, Europe](#), *The Observer*, 19 April 2023.

²² Note: International media outlets also referred to the “Kill the Gays bill” in 2014 and before its assent due to the death penalty clauses in its original version, so this was not a uniquely local phenomenon, but its local ramifications were presumably more acute.

²³ See: “[100 Pictures of Uganda’s Top Homos Leak: Hang Them](#)” in *Rolling Stone* tabloid, October 2010 and “[Exposed! Uganda’s 200 Top Homos Named](#)” in *Red Pepper* tabloid, published one day after Museveni signed the 2014 law.

²⁴ See further discussion of this in “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022”, particularly [Curious case of Mukisa: A victim or blackmailer?](#)

²⁵ Although this assertion is not explicitly demonstrated in coded data from this report, it aligns with findings from “Media Representation of LGBTQI+ People in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: 2021-2022” and clips collected and analyzed for that report leading into the 2023 period, particularly with regard to Archbishop Kaziimba’s dangerous remarks.

²⁶ Source statements have been edited for brevity and clarity.

²⁷ An ecosystem ripe for further investigation/research

²⁸ which journalists at *The Monitor* did somewhat effectively in the October 2022 story [Curious case of Mukisa: A victim or blackmailer?](#)

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Taboom Media and the many partners and grantees of Arcus who contributed to this report.

About the Author

Brian Pelot is Taboom Media's co-founding director. He speaks regularly about LGBTQI+ rights at media and human rights conferences around the world. He is based in Cape Town, South Africa, where he occasionally freelances for international news outlets and NGOs. Before Taboom, Brian served as Religion News Service's director of global strategy, as Index on Censorship's digital policy advisor, and as Free Speech Debate's online editor. He is a volunteer mentor-editor at The OpEd Project. Brian graduated from the University of Missouri with dual degrees in International Convergence Journalism and International Studies. He completed a master's degree in Modern Middle Eastern Studies at Oxford University.

About the Arcus Foundation

Founded in 2000, the Arcus Foundation is dedicated to the idea that people can live in harmony with one another and the natural world. Arcus' work is based on the belief that respect for diversity among people and in nature is essential to a positive future for our planet and all of its inhabitants. Arcus is among the most consistent funders of social justice work for the safety, acceptance, and inclusion of LGBTQ people around the world, and of conservation work to ensure the world's great apes and gibbons can thrive in their natural habitats. The Foundation works globally and has offices in New York City and Cambridge, United Kingdom. Learn more at www.arcusfoundation.org.

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