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Progressive cash for the anti-LGBTQI backlash?

How aid donors and 'feminist'
governments have funded backers of
Uganda's deadly Anti-Homosexuality Bill

Donor/development partners' responses
to our findings

Finland (Foreign Ministry)

Thank you for your valuable email.

Finland considers the principle of non-discrimination as a cornerstone of human rights. All human beings are born equal and they must be guaranteed the same rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Finland advocates the elimination of all forms of criminalisation as well as other discriminatory legislation and official measures based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. We support every person's right to define his/her gender and sexuality on his/her own terms. Finland supports the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersex people, or LGBTI persons, through economic and political means.

When acting on government grant organisations are independent actors but have to comply with Finnish legislation. Organisations receiving development cooperation funds from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs commit to applying and adhering to the Ethical Code of Conduct in its development cooperation activities. The current ethical Code of Conduct ([enforced from 2022](#)) can be found here:

<https://um.fi/documents/397000/0/General+conditions+for+the+use+of+discretionary+government+grants+awarded+by+the+Ministry+for+Foreign+Affairs+and+complementary+conditions+for+programme+support+together+with+the+ethical+code+of+condu+%281%29.pdf/48dadaa2-6f11-bef3-7dbb-ded240619bcf?t=1644934175021> but there has been an ethical code of conduct for long period of time.

In case an organisation fails to meet these conditions for the use of the grant awarded to it, the Ministry can set a date by which the conditions must be fulfilled, suspend the disbursement, or demand a repayment of paid instalments.

We encourage to report any suspicion of the misuse of development cooperation funds, such as bribery, embezzlement or other actions that are in conflict with the conditions applying to the use of the funding. All reports are handled either at our Ministry or referred to other public authorities. You can make a report here:

<https://um.fi/do-you-suspect-misuse-of-development-cooperation-funds->

United States (USAID)

It is a foreign policy priority of the Biden-Harris administration to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons globally, and USAID is proud to play a central and important role in helping support conditions around the world so that LGBTQI+ people are respected, live with dignity, and are free from violence, discrimination, stigmatization, and criminalization.

In line with this, USAID is committed to nondiscrimination for all program participants—including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity—and works to ensure that no one is discriminated against in USAID-funded programs. USAID regularly reviews and assesses the work of our partners to ensure they are operating in a manner that is consistent with our values and takes appropriate actions in response. We take these commitments seriously and are looking into the matter further.

Canada (Global Affairs Canada)

The project in question was led by the Africa Community Technical Service, and ran from 2014 to 2016. Its objective was to improve health and food security through improving access to potable water and training in health and agriculture. The Church of Uganda was one of eight local partners in the project.

The Government of Canada is deeply concerned by the anti-gay legislation that was approved by Uganda's parliament in March 2023. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly both immediately and forcefully condemned the bill and urged Ugandan lawmakers to reconsider the legislation.

Canada is committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of 2SLGBTQI+ persons at home and around the world, as respect for human rights is at the heart of Canada's international policies and engagement, including the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) launched in 2021.

In 2019, the Government of Canada announced the LGBTQ2I+ International Assistance Program (the Program), which represents \$30 million in dedicated funding over five years, and \$10 million per year thereafter to advance human rights and improve socio-economic outcomes for LGBTQI+ people in developing countries.

Germany (BMZ)

Evangelische Zentralstelle für Entwicklung (EZE) has funded a project with Uganda Orthodox Mothers Union (UOMU), the women's organization of the Orthodox Church of Uganda, during the said period of 2018 - 2021. This is not an institutional funding of the Orthodox Church Uganda, but a project funding that explicitly aims to promote and empower disadvantaged people. Currently, a follow-up phase of the project is underway. The project focuses on strengthening the self-help capacities of disadvantaged people.

In addition, EZE is funding a project with the organization CHAPTER 4, which aims to support young lesbian, gay and transgender people. The project is the first for parents, friends and family of lesbian, gay and transgender children in Uganda. Parents get information and support and safe spaces to meet. The new allies are supposed to lobby for the rights of sexual minorities, publish articles and engage for their legal protection.

The BMZ is following developments in Uganda very closely and with great concern. We have been in close contact with people in Uganda who are affected by this legislation for a long time. We take their specific needs into account in our approach and reactions.

We will closely coordinate possible reactions in the donor group and in the EU. The Ugandan government is aware of our position. The situation of civil society and the impairment of social groups was and is the subject of our discussions with Ugandan government and parliamentary representatives.

The BMZ works closely with civil society in Uganda to strengthen the capacities and political participation of civil society organisations. The aim is to promote development based on the recognized principles of human rights, which benefits all social groups and does not exclude, leave anyone behind or criminalize them in an unjustified manner.

Austria (Foreign Ministry)

We can confirm that as part of the Austrian Development Cooperation, Austria is contributing to the funding of clearly earmarked activities of the UNDP project "Strengthening Electoral Processes". The funded activities include a radio programme to inform voters about the election, and the training of the Human Rights Commission as well as of judicial staff and security forces on how to conduct election support. The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda received neither direct nor indirect Austrian funds.

The Austrian position is clear: We are deeply concerned and appalled about the impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. As one of the first European states, we criticised this discriminatory and dehumanising legislation publicly on 22 March. In this regard, we also

co-signed a letter in our capacity as member of the Equal Rights Coalition to President Museveni, urging not to sign this bill.

Austria is strongly committed to ensuring the full enjoyment of all human rights for everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation. Legislation which criminalizes homosexuality and foresees long prison sentences and even the death penalty as a punishment, is not acceptable. The Anti-homosexuality Act, if signed, undermines the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Ugandans. We therefore urge the Ugandan Government once again to uphold the human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Ugandan Constitution, stipulating equality and non-discrimination for all, its international obligations and commitments, and the principles of the African Charter. Such a law would be contradictory to many aspects we have focused on in our cooperation in the justice sector built on decades of a constructive relationship.