



Bisi Alimi  
Foundation

ACCELERATING SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE  
OF LGBT PEOPLE IN NIGERIA



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# RAINBOW ACADEMY RESIDENTIAL TRAINING 2023

# ABOUT THE RAINBOW ACADEMY

**The Rainbow Academy was born from the vision “to create a generation of well-rounded LGBT persons in Nigeria with a strong value of self to influence positive change in society.” This vision is aligned with BAF’s mission of “accelerating social acceptance of LGBTQ persons in Nigeria.”**

Rainbow Academy is a twelve-month intensive training program, with a 7-day residential training held in Lagos, Nigeria. Twenty LGBTQIA+ individuals from across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, drawing from all spectra of the rainbow were brought together on a life-impacting journey, starting with its virtual training sessions engaging scholars in virtual classes and workshops and a 7-day residential Training. The program aims to build the skills of its participants in areas such as personal and professional development. Facilitators from within and outside the Bisi Alimi Foundation, including alumni of the Rainbow Academy and the Media Justice Fellowship, another sister program of the Foundation, were involved in this process. The Bisi Alimi Foundation is dedicated to promoting social change and fostering greater acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals. We believe that for this change to occur, it is important to provide the community with the necessary tools and skills to understand the law, achieve financial/self-sufficiency, and actively engage as citizens.

# OUR OBJECTIVES

The Rainbow Academy is aimed at equipping LGBTQ+ people with

- Skills for personal and professional development.
- Increased awareness and understanding of affirming and preventive Sexual-Reproductive Health and Rights services and mechanisms.
- Understanding the law and their fundamental Human Rights.
- Effective activism: speaking the correct language to the appropriate audience.
- Telling their own story.
- Building a sustainable business and attaining a degree of financial independence.
- Give scholars the Ability to Influence positive change in society.



**The Rainbow Academy curriculum has been designed to engage our scholars over a 12-month period, with a 7-day residential. Throughout this duration, the program prioritizes the following areas of focus.**

- Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Power
- Communication and creative writing
- Media Engagement
- Business Development
- Mental Health and Mindfulness
- Law and Human Rights
- Security
- System Thinking
- Career Development etc.

Scholars receive comprehensive training and support across various development stages, which has resulted in significant personal growth for participants. This has helped some of the participants embrace their authentic identities, make notable contributions in their area of activism, and present at international conferences and festivals, among other achievements.



Scholars Arriving Goethe Institute



Bisi and Scholars Meditating on Mindfulness



Cross Section Of the Bisi Alimi Foundation Staff

# RESIDENTIAL TRAINING

# PRE-RESIDENTIAL TRAINING

During the pre-residential training, scholars were engaged in a series of virtual activities designed to enhance their understanding of various important topics. Diego Blum, a distinguished lecturer from Harvard University, provided in-depth training on system thinking, social change, and the impact of myths and misconceptions. This session equipped scholars with the necessary tools to critically analyze complex societal issues. Furthermore, Barrister Chizelo, an MJF Fellow and pro bono lawyer, delivered an insightful presentation on LGBTQ rights in Nigeria and human rights law. This session provided scholars with valuable insights into the legal challenges faced by marginalized communities.

In addition to this, Saviour Light, an esteemed RA 2022 Alumni facilitated discussions on mental health and wellness. The session played a key role in equipping scholars with strategies for self-care and promoting mental well-being within their communities.

Tristan Barbar from the Free London NHS FOUNDATION TRUST facilitated a comprehensive session on advancements in HIV treatment, prevention, and stigma reduction. Scholars gained a deeper understanding of contemporary approaches to addressing HIV-related challenges.

As part of the extracurricular activity, Scholars hosted a virtual pride celebration event. Participants exhibited their skills in arts such as music and spoken word performances. Engaging group activities were organized for participants to debate the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA), providing them with real-world experience in crafting persuasive arguments and enhancing their advocacy skills for future impactful work.



# MEET OUR SCHOLARS



**Gideon**



**Sharnel**



**Moses**



**Olabode**



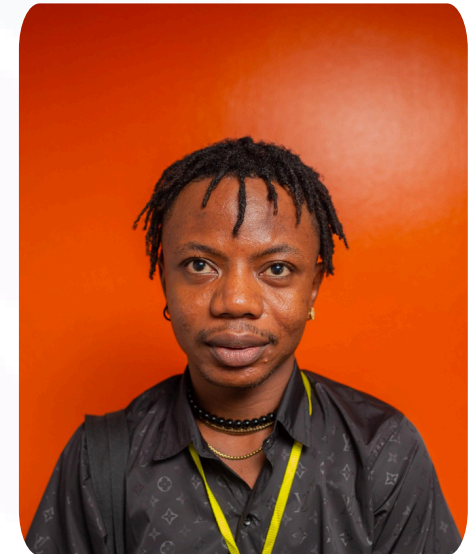
**Maureen**



**Victoria**



**Eze**



**Kira**

# MEET OUR SCHOLARS



**John**



**Joy**



**Kingsley**



**Nelson**



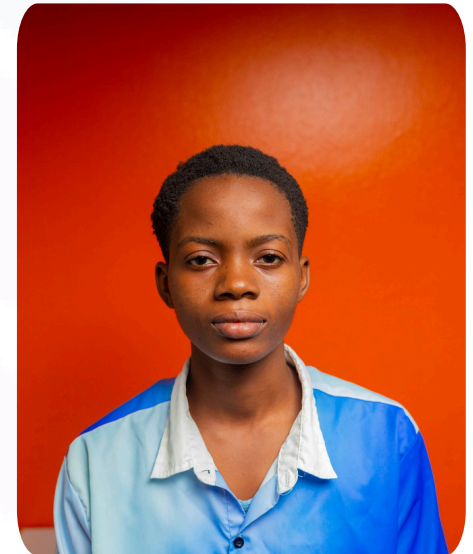
**Sandra**



**Kayode**



**Raava**



**Pee**

# MEET OUR SCHOLARS



**GT**



**Lionel**



**Sunny**

# RESIDENTIAL TRAINING

The Residential Training commenced with scholars convening from different regions of the country. The program was inaugurated with a welcome dinner, fostering an opportunity for scholars to connect and acquaint themselves with one another, as well as engage with the Foundation team. Distinguished guests, including leaders from other LGBTQ-led organizations in Lagos, were also present at the event. Thereafter, a series of comprehensive training sessions spanning five days commenced at Goethe Institute. These sessions delved into a diverse array of topics to equip scholars with invaluable insights and skills essential for their personal and professional development.



A cross-section of scholars



Emotional scholars during the marginal and mainstream session.



Scholars participating in group work during the training.

## Sessions taken during the Residentials Included:

- Mindfulness
- Personal Identity
- SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) and Coming Out
- System Thinking Revision
- Leadership and Power Dynamics
- Communication Strategies and Storytelling
- Mainstream vs Margin
- Campaign Communication; Activism versus Advocacy.
- Business Development and Entrepreneurship
- Design Thinking

**These sessions provide scholars with holistic learning experiences that encompass critical areas such as self-awareness, leadership dynamics within societal structures, effective communication strategies, entrepreneurial insight and social impact through activism and advocacy efforts.**



Scholars actively participates in meditation exercise

**During the evening sessions of the Residential Training, scholars participated in various activities designed to foster bonds, build friendships, and promote a spirit of friendly competition. To facilitate these interactions, participants were divided into four Houses, which engaged in a series of dynamic and entertaining events, including:**

- **Treasure Hunt:**

A collaborative adventure that encouraged teamwork and problem-solving skills as scholars searched for clues and completed challenges throughout the venue.

- **Mastermind Game Show:**

A trivia-based competition that tested participants' knowledge across a range of subjects, stimulating intellectual engagement and quick thinking.

- **Snatch Game (Celebrity Impersonation Game Show):**

A lighthearted and entertaining event where scholars showcased their creativity and performance skills by impersonating celebrities, fostering laughter and the spirit of togetherness among participants.

## Activism vs. Advocacy Campaign Challenge



In addition to these engaging activities, scholars participated in an Activism vs. Advocacy Campaign Challenge. Two standout campaigns emerged during this process:

1. **“Let the Queers Breathe”** An Activist Approach to Ending Violence Against Queer Nigerians. This campaign focused on raising awareness and advocating for the safety and rights of the queer community in Nigeria.



# Activism vs. Advocacy Campaign Challenge

## WHO IS OLA?

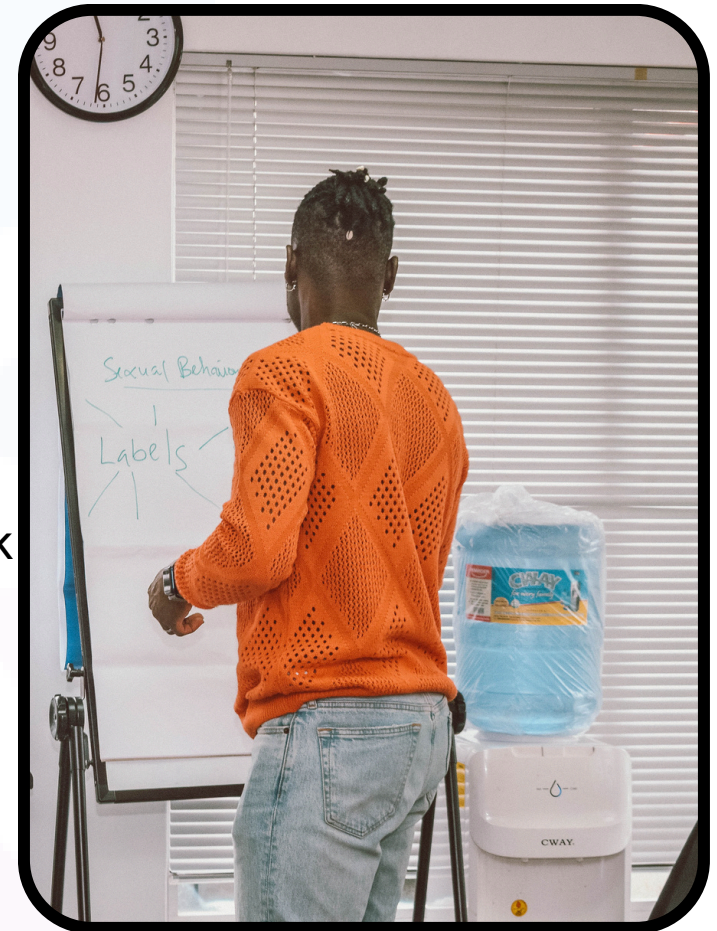
### **"2. Who Is Ola" The Activist Approach to Trans Visibility and Access to Healthcare in Nigeria"**

#### **"Who Is Ola": The Activist Approach to Trans Visibility and Healthcare in Nigeria**

This initiative sought to highlight the challenges faced by transgender individuals in accessing healthcare in Nigeria, where cultural stigmas, legal discrimination, and social ostracism prevail. It aimed to raise awareness about issues such as lack of proper medical care, limited access to gender-affirming treatments, and discrimination from healthcare providers. By promoting visibility and sharing stories, "Who Is Ola" sought to foster inclusivity, challenge norms, and advocate for equitable healthcare access through media channels like social media.

Below is a short clip of the "Who Is Ola" campaign:

[WHO IS OLA](#)





## MINI-GRANT INITIATIVE

Additionally, participants had the opportunity to pitch their business ideas to a panel of jurors for a chance at funding, as part of the organization's initiative to support queer-owned businesses in Nigeria. A total of \$2,000 in funding was awarded to four deserving businesses. This financial assistance aims to enhance the operational capacity of these young LGBTQ entrepreneurs, while also providing ongoing mentorship to guide their growth and sustainability.



The Residential Training concluded with the RA BALL-themed “Rainbow African Extravaganza” which attracted over 250 guests from across Nigeria. This vibrant celebration recognized the achievements of scholars and highlighted the collective spirit of the community. During the event, the prestigious Jonathan Copoper Award for Achievement was presented to Barrister Chizelo Emejulu honoring his exemplary contributions to the advocacy for LGBTQ rights. Additionally, scholars were awarded certificates in recognition of their successful completion of the program, marking a significant milestone in their personal and professional journeys.



House Mother vs Mother Extravaganza at the RA Ball.



Scholars Performing their Opening Dance at the RA Ball.

# IMPACTS OF RAINBOW ACADEMY TRAINING ON SCHOLARS



Since 2020, the Rainbow Academy program has provided training for 60 individuals within the LGBTQI+ community and has invested in nine LGBTQ-owned businesses. The program has proven to yield positive outcomes for all participating scholars. Feedback gathered from our post-training survey reveals that 100% of respondents have reported a favourable impact resulting from the training.

The following are select testimonials from scholars highlighting the beneficial effects of the Rainbow Academy on their personal and professional lives:



**Nelson Kanu (He/Him)**

As someone passionate about personal growth, being part of this program helped me learn more about myself and my power. It made me feel seen and opened my eyes and mind to possibilities and opportunities that abound for me and made me realise that my sexuality is part of me, but it doesn't define who I am.



**Joy Ebimami (She/Her)**

“This training gave me a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the LGBTQI community. It also gave me the tools and knowledge to support and advocate for the community in my daily interactions. I now have a greater sense of purpose and a clear vision of how I can positively impact the world.”



**Adejare Olukayode (He/Him)**

"The training had an immense impact on me. Every session inspired me. It promoted my culture of respect and tolerance. I also got exposed to specific LGBTQ issues and challenges. Additionally, it enhanced my capacity for personal development, teamwork, and SOGIESC."



**Victoria Augustine (She/Her)**

"It changed my perspective about leadership and made me realize I deserve better and should also do better. It has also brought out an entrepreneurial spirit I never thought I had. I was battling depression when I came for the residential, but although I couldn't directly talk about it, I was able to let it out during the session on mainstream and margin. And I've not gone back to that place anymore."






**John Eche (They/Them)**

Personally, it sparked awareness about my personal development and actualizing a reality while pursuing personal identification. The mindfulness exercises made me realize that no matter how busy life gets, I should pause to rejuvenate my body, soul, and spirit. The Mainstream and Margin exercise, though emotional, helped me share with the team and understand that there will be times of powerlessness and power. Regardless, I shouldn't be defined by my situation but should seek solutions and avoid judging others based on their circumstances or actions. Professionally, the business development exercise brought me new energy for advancing my business.

## WHAT SCHOLARS LEARNED

The Rainbow Academy residential program comprised three main sessions: the training proper (morning session), extra-curricular activities (evening session) and the Rainbow Academy Ball. This comprehensive program was carefully crafted to afford scholars ample time not only to develop their skills, but also to tap into their inner strengths, engage in recreational activities, and network with fellow participants.

To ensure that we could accurately quantify and measure the impacts of the program, we conducted surveys with scholars before training, during training, and after the residential training conclusion. This approach enabled us to effectively gauge the progress of our scholars and assess whether the training was achieving its intended objectives. The feedback from our post-training survey has provided valuable insight into some of the significant lessons learned by some of the scholars.



One of the most impactful lessons I learned during this training was how to effectively manage psychological and emotional concerns. Through the practice of meditation, I discovered an invaluable self-improvement technique that empowered me to navigate life's complexities with resilience and grace.

It made me delve into the intricacies of business enterprises and acquire practical knowledge on how to boost sales - an essential skill set that will undoubtedly serve me well in my future endeavors as a business owner.

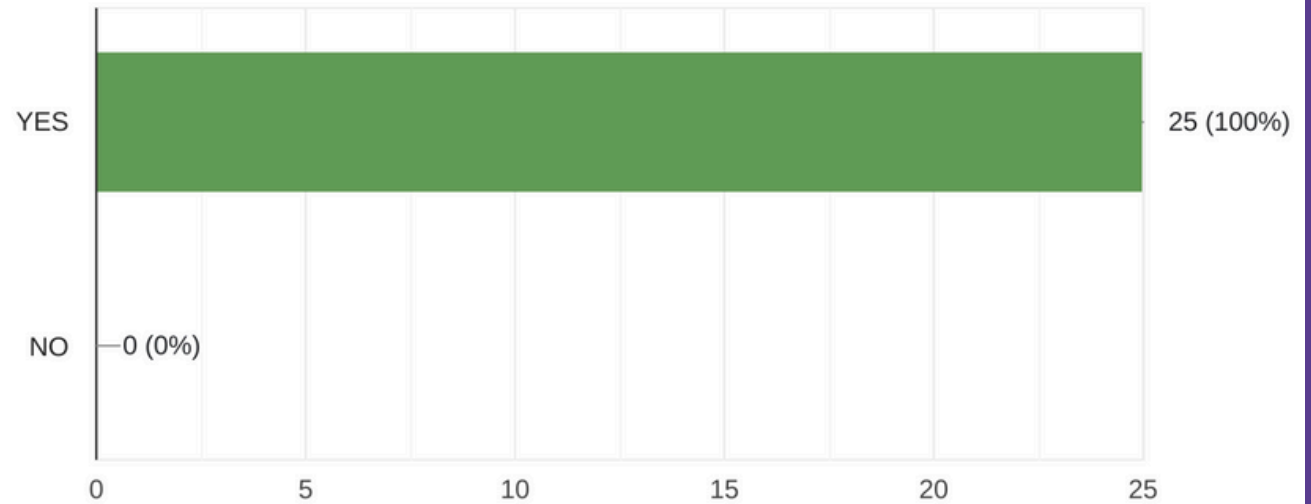
The Rainbow Academy residential program has been a transformative experience for me and my fellow scholars. It guided me on a profound journey of self-discovery, helping me recalibrate my thinking, redefine my outlook on life, and improve my interpersonal interactions.

The training equipped me with valuable insights into leveraging my unique skill sets for both financial gain and societal good. This not only expanded my professional horizons but also instilled within me a sense of responsibility to make a positive impact on the lives of those around me.

The Rainbow Academy residential program has equipped me with a multifaceted toolkit for personal growth and professional advancement and I am profoundly grateful for this enriching experience which has undoubtedly left an indelible mark on my life journey.

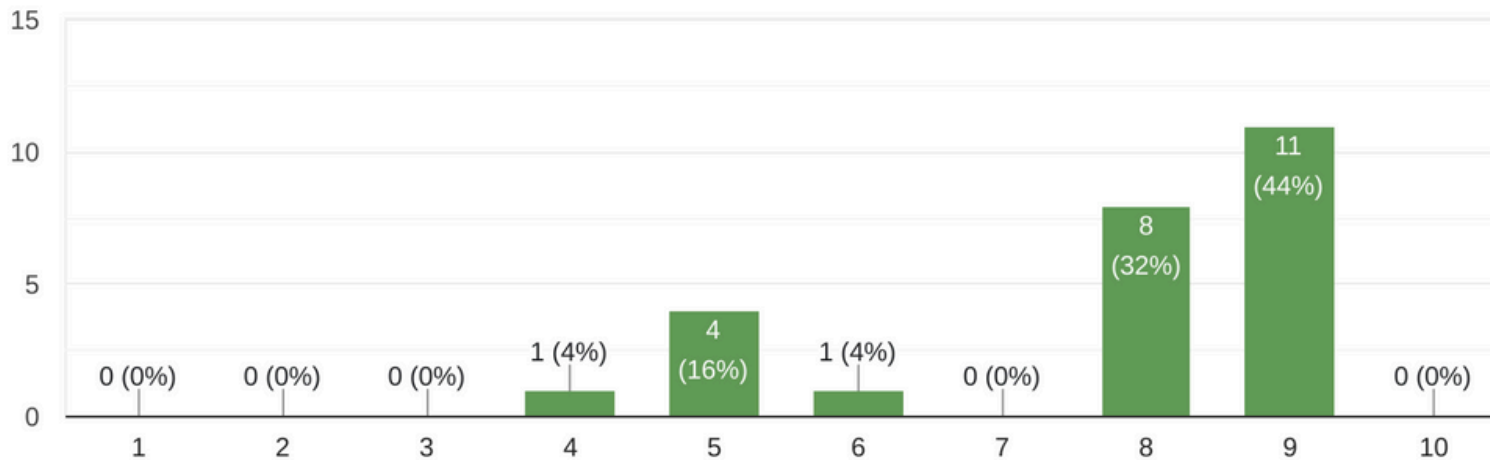
## Has the Rainbow Academy Leadership Program virtual classes met your expectations?

25 responses



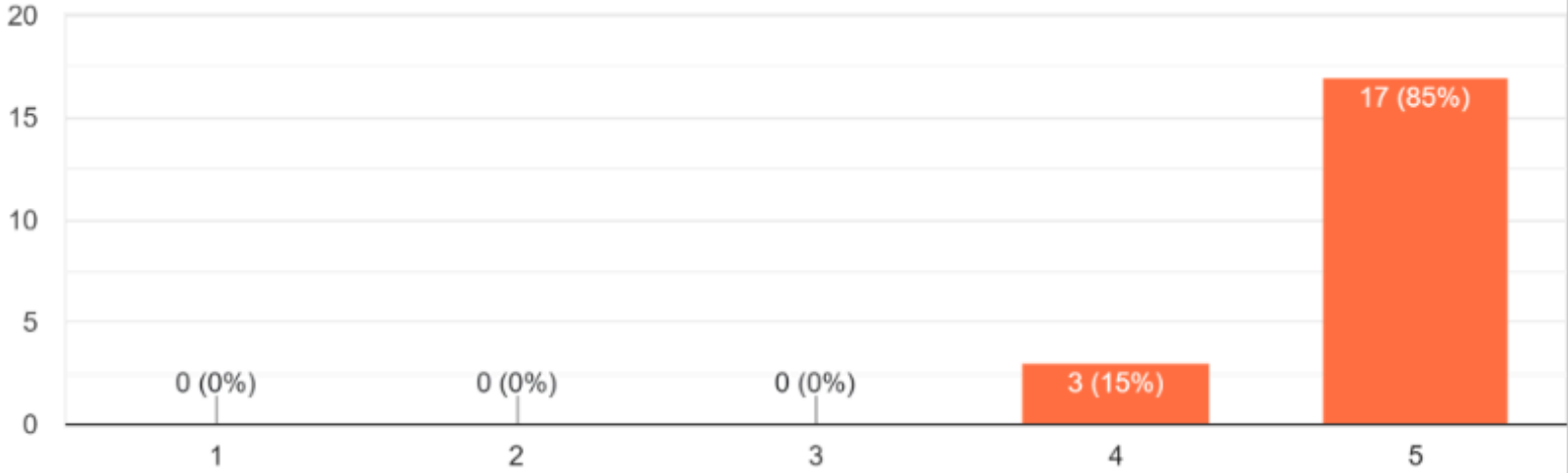
On a scale of 1-10, with respect to your learning thus far, with 1 having little knowledge and 10 having high knowledge. How would you rate your understanding on BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

25 responses



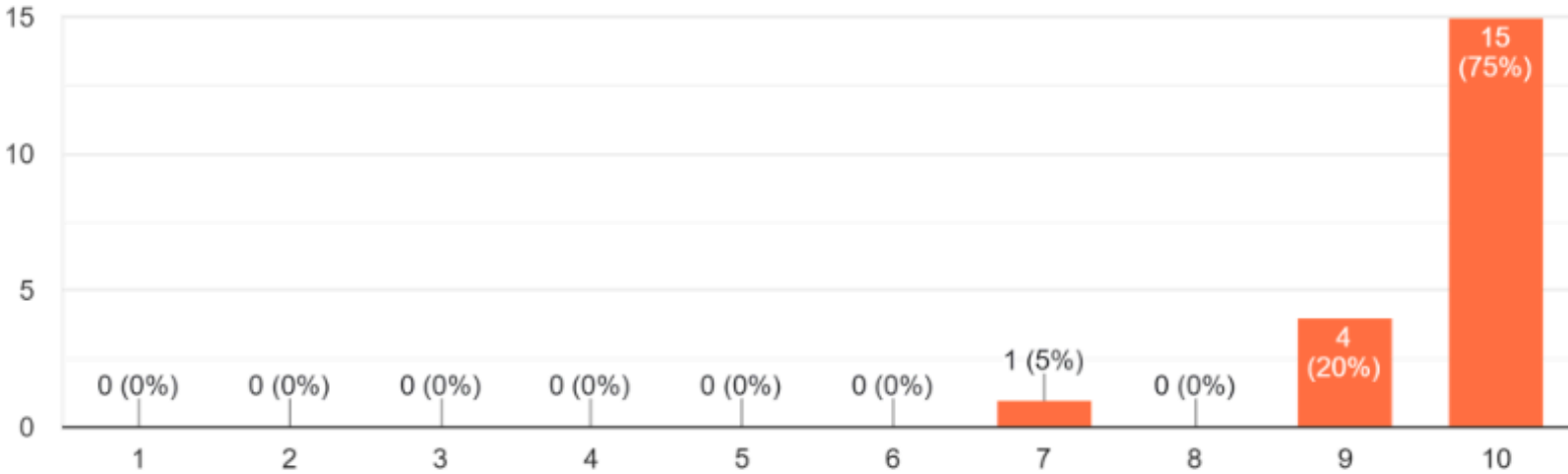
Overall, how satisfied are you with the training/workshop? Were the expectations you had about the training/workshop met?

20 responses



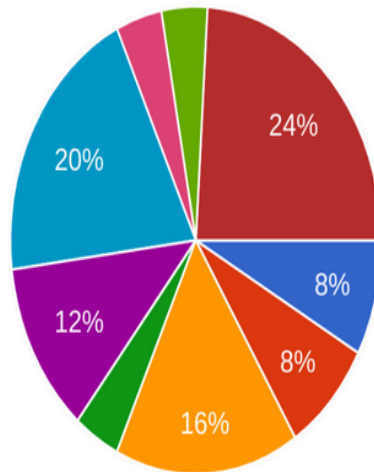
### Topic Relevance

20 responses



## Which of the virtual Classes did you find most impactful and relevant to your learning.

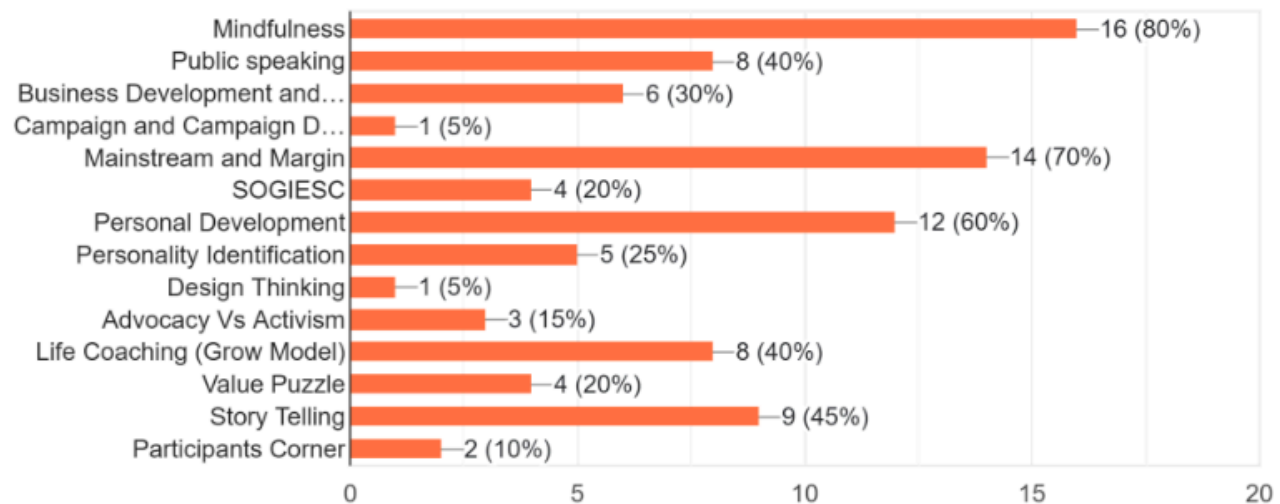
25 responses



- Understanding the Sodomy Laws of Nigeria & the SSMPA
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Right...
- Values, Mindset, Principles and Practi...
- Intro To Productivity Tools
- Values vs Ethics vs Morals.
- Introduction to Ethics, Values and Mor...
- Digital Marketing
- Campaigning Communications - Chan...
- Introduction to entrepreneurship and s...

## Which of these session had the most impact on you? (Pick 5 Options below)

20 responses



# WHAT WE LEARNED

As an organization, we are committed to continuous learning and improvement. We understand the importance of gaining insights from the individuals who benefit from our programs, and we utilize these experiences to enhance the quality of our programs and strengthen our organizational capacity.

Below are some of the key lessons we have learned from these interactions, as well as the measures we are implementing to ensure that our programs remain relevant and effective.



## **Hybrid Learning Approach:**

- In the most recent session, we successfully implemented a hybrid program model, incorporating both virtual training sessions and in-person residential training. Through this approach, we identified the strengths and weaknesses of each modality. Moving forward, our focus is on expanding online classes to provide greater flexibility during in-person residential sessions.

## **Introduction of New Courses:**

- With the collaboration of our international supporters, we have enriched the Rainbow Academy curriculum by introducing new courses such as System Thinking, Campaign Communication, Activism/Advocacy, and Design Thinking

## **Prioritizing on Collaborations and Partnerships:**

- This year has seen remarkable growth in collaborations and partnerships at both local and international levels. Notable alliances with organizations such as Gay Times, Openly, and Minority Watch have been established. We are committed to nurturing these relationships to enhance the Rainbow Academy Program along with other BAF initiatives.



## **Integration of Technology:**

- Leveraging technological advancements has been a key focus area for us in exploring opportunities for personal development within the queer community. As part of our vision for future growth, we are dedicated to incorporating tech-related courses into the RA program beginning from the next session.

## **Mentorship Program for Queer-Owned Businesses:**

- We recognize the importance of supporting queer-owned businesses through mentorship programs. As such, we are actively developing initiatives to provide guidance and support for LGBTQ entrepreneurs.

To ensure the sustained effectiveness of the Rainbow Academy program and increase its impact on societal progress and economic empowerment/liberation for queer/trans persons, several recommendations were identified based on thorough observations, feedback analysis, risk assessments, and challenges encountered during the Rainbow Academy session.

# SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rainbow Academy Residential Training Program stands as a one-of-a-kind initiative in Nigeria, hopeful for potential expansion across Africa. Its core vision of nurturing a generation of well-rounded LGBT individuals, equipped to promote positive societal change, greatly depends on strategic support, initiatives, partnerships, and unwavering determination. The program offers participants an invaluable opportunity to acquire life-changing developmental and entrepreneurial skills while fostering networking among like-minded individuals committed to effecting social change. By inspiring socio-economic transformation and promoting broader visibility and advocacy at grassroots levels, the training plays a vital role in driving societal acceptance.

To ensure the sustained effectiveness of the Rainbow Academy program and increase its impact on both societal progress and economic empowerment/liberation for queer/trans persons, several recommendations have been identified based on thorough observations, feedback analysis, risk assessments, and challenges encountered during the Rainbow Academy session.



# Recommendation for Bisi Alimi Foundation :

- **Diversity in Recruitment:** Establish an equitable recruiting process that embraces diversity and inclusivity while ensuring that everyone in the LGBTQI+ spectrum is represented including LGBT individuals living with a disability.
- **Financial Support:** Increase the amount of funding allocated towards supporting LGBTQI+-owned businesses and startups through the Rainbow Academy micro-grants
- **Mentorship Programs:** Design and implement mentorship programs to guide LGBTQI+ entrepreneurs who are recipients of Rainbow Academy Micro-grants and other young LGBTQ entrepreneurs.

# Recommendation for donors/partners

- Long-Term Funding Framework: Establish multi-year funding for Rainbow Academy to increase project sustainability.
- Networking Opportunities: Support the creation of networking events and platforms that connect LGBTQI+ entrepreneurs with potential investors and mentors fostering a supportive environment for business growth and collaboration within the LGBTQI+ community.

By giving due consideration to these recommendations through informed discussions and planning processes, we can steer toward transforming perceptions within society while fostering lasting economic empowerment/liberation for queer/trans persons through an empowered fellowship. Implementing these recommendations will not only reshape existing narratives but also solidify our capacity as agents of meaningful societal change rooted in sustainable practices.

This holistic approach underscores our commitment to advancing inclusivity while championing greater opportunities across diverse spectrums within the LGBTQ community's socioeconomic landscape.


# Bisi Alim Foundation

## THANK YOU

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