

2025 in Story: From Survival to Collective Power A Reading Summary of One Love Sisters Ghana's Year

2025 was a year of holding the line, and then stretching it. For One Love Sisters Ghana (OLS), the year unfolded in the tension between care and crisis, growth and grief, strategy and survival. In a national climate marked by deepening hostility toward LGBTQI+ communities, OLS chose to root its work in what it has always done best: staying close to community, building safety where systems fail, and insisting, quietly but firmly, that queer lives are worthy of care, dignity, and joy.

At the heart of OLS's work in 2025 was the Kabi Ma Me GBV Hotline, a national lifeline woven across all 16 regions, supported by 32 operators and 3 coordinators. The hotline did more than respond to emergencies; it became a steady presence in moments of fear, isolation, and violence. Survivors reached out not only for crisis support, but for reassurance, for referrals, for someone to listen without judgment. Behind every call was the invisible labour of care, operators absorbing trauma, navigating safety in hostile environments, and holding survivors through moments when the world felt unsafe. This year, OLS doubled down on strengthening emergency response systems: improving risk assessment, referrals, documentation, and staff support, while recognizing that care for survivors must go hand in hand with care for caregivers.

Alongside crisis response, OLS deepened its commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for LBQ and gender non-conforming (GNC) persons. In Ghana, accessing healthcare remains fraught with fear of stigma, outing, and abuse. In 2025, OLS continued to bridge this gap through SRHR awareness, community referrals, and the strengthening of tele-nursing and frontline response. The work was not just about services; it was about restoring trust in care. Through training and systems-building, OLS worked to ensure that LBQ and GNC persons could encounter healthcare not as a site of harm, but as a space of dignity.

The year also carried a quieter but equally powerful thread: healing. OLS' collective healing spaces reminded the community that survival alone is not enough. **Healing sessions created room to breathe, to release grief, to name burnout, and to reclaim softness in the face of relentless pressure.** These spaces recognized what activism often hides: that those who care for others are also carrying wounds of their own. Healing became a political practice: an act of resistance against the normalization of exhaustion and emotional sacrifice.

Economic insecurity continued to shadow many LBQ and GNC lives in 2025. **In response, OLS built on the momentum of its Economic Empowerment Workshops,**

expanding pathways to livelihood skills, entrepreneurship, and peer mentorship. Beyond income generation, the work aimed to restore a sense of agency and possibility, to move participants from surviving day-to-day to imagining longer futures. The integration of economic empowerment with mental health support reflected a core lesson of the year: resilience is holistic. You cannot separate bread from breath, income from inner wellbeing.

Faith, often a site of exclusion, became a space of return through OLS' Annual Iftar with Queer Muslims. What began as an act of belonging evolved into something deeper, a recognition that Queer Muslims deserve spiritual safety as much as physical safety. In 2025, this work matured into a vision for bi-annual healing and dialogue spaces, where Queer Muslims can explore how conscious and unconscious biases shape SRHR and GBV within their communities. The gatherings moved beyond symbolism, opening pathways for honest conversations about harm, silence, consent, and care, rooted in faith but grounded in lived realities in Ghana.

Internally, 2025 marked a year of organizational strengthening and strategic maturation. OLS invested in operational management, staff capacity, and safeguarding systems, while preparing for a deeper shift: embedding an intersectional feminist lens across leadership, governance, and programming. This meant asking harder questions about power, care, accountability, and sustainability, within the organization as much as in the communities it serves. The year sharpened OLS's understanding that effectiveness is not only about doing more, but about doing better: aligning systems with values, and growth with wellbeing.

The year was not without challenges. Shrinking civic space, heightened surveillance, funding pressures, and the emotional toll of frontline work tested the organization's limits. Yet, 2025 also revealed OLS's quiet strength: its ability to adapt without losing its soul; to scale without becoming distant; to professionalize without abandoning its grassroots heartbeat. The organization learned that sustainability is not just financial, it is emotional, relational, and political.

As OLS looks ahead, the story of 2025 stands as a testament to what it means to practice care as strategy. The work continues to move from emergency response toward long-term resilience; from isolated interventions toward integrated systems of support; from survival toward collective power. **In a time when queer lives are made precarious by design, OLS's work insists on another truth: community care is not a soft add-on to justice work; it is the infrastructure of survival.**