ETHIOPIA

LGBTQIA+ Country Fact Sheet

THE INTERNATIONAL PRIDE CENTRE
PROTECTION, RIGHTS, INCLUSION IN DISPLACEMENT & EMERGENCIES

Humanitarian Overview

1.13M+
Refugees (UNHCR, Aug 2026)

1.92M
Internally Displaced Persons

2.5M
In need of SRH services (UNFPA 2026)

2.8M
IDP Returnees

Humanitarian context:
Ethiopia faces complex crises driven by conflicts, recurrent drought, and mass displacement. Conflict in Tigray and other regions has been escalating. Widespread targeting of LGBTQIA+ persons has been documented.
There are over 1 million refugees seeking asylum from South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, and conflicts in neighbouring countries threaten to spread across borders. 10-15% of the population face crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity.



> *'The government are actively claiming that queer people don't exist. Even in the HIV roadmaps. Any efforts to advocate for the inclusion of queer people in these frameworks are surveilled and opposed by the government.'*
>
> Queer organiser, Addis Ababa

Estimated minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected[1]

56,000
LGBTQIA+ refugees & asylum seekers

96,000
LGBTQIA+ internally displaced persons (IDPs)

140,000
LGBTQIA+ IDP returnees

6.9M
LGBTQIA+ people in the host population

The social and cultural context in Ethiopia, and the influence of both local religious movements and the global anti-gender movement, make it one of the most hostile environments for queer people on the continent. Invisibility is a survival strategy. Transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex communities are particularly invisible.

> **LGBTQIA+ IDPs AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS**
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> *'The INGOs don't provide any services for us at all. They don't provide any access to food, shelter, or anything, for queer IDPs...most of the staff are Ethiopian. They are homophobic.'*
>
> PRIDE Centre key informant interview, 2026

[1] In the absence of demographic data in the countries where we work, The PRIDE Centre conservatively estimates that 5% of populations in Africa identify as SOGIESC minorities. Map boundaries: geoBoundaries (CC BY 4.0) and Natural Earth; illustrative only, not an official depiction of boundaries.

LGBTQIA+ Legal & Policy Environment

The Penal Code (2004) criminalises same-sex sexual acts (Art. 629): 10 days to 3 years' imprisonment; aggravated offences: 1 to 15 years (Art. 630); offences involving minors: 3 to 25 years (Art. 631).
Community members report these allegations are added to consensual cases, without evidence, to lengthen sentences.

Public indecency, obscene publications and indecent publicity provisions (Arts. 639, 640, 643) are increasingly used to arrest people for how they dress or present, and could in theory be used against organisations.

In practice, trials are held in secret, people are jailed without charge, and bribes buy releases. Interviewees cite 15 to 25 years as common sentences. There are no queer-friendly legal aid services.

Community Risks and Rights Violations

- **Threats, extortion and outings:** Organised groups, individuals, and sometimes police, use dating and messaging apps to lure and blackmail people.; Outings frequently trigger family rejection, firing, evictions, displacement, and violence.
- **Violence:** Mob attacks and use of dating apps to trap individuals - mostly gay men - have resulted in brutal attacks and even murder, and have been filmed and circulated on social media; Violence is rarely reported and never investigated by authorities.
- **Arbitrary arrest:** Suspicion alone can lead to detention without trial, abuse in custody and 'indecent acts' charges.
- **Sexual violence:** LBQ women face blackmail, 'corrective' rape and forced marriage; In conflicts in Tigray and Oromia, LGBTQIA+ people including boys and young men are targeted by armed actors and cannot safely seek care.
- **Forced conscription:** LGBTQIA+ people targeted with forced conscription face increased violence, including sexual violence, within the armed forces.
- **Health:** No identified queer-friendly facilities; Queer communities are excluded from the national HIV strategy; Lack of SGBV resources for LGBTQIA+ survivors; surveillance of HIV testing facilities.
- **Mental health:** Widespread depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation; No known LGBTQIA+ safe and competent providers; Mental health practitioners frequently revert to forced conversion methods; Peer volunteers carry unsustainable burdens with little formal training or resources.
- **Shelter:** Immediate eviction upon suspicion; Safe spaces regularly raided by authorities.
- **Education & livelihoods:** Blackmail, harassment and expulsion when under suspicion at school; Blacklisting and dismissal if outed; Limited safe livelihood options once outed; Reliance on sex work for survival is common.
- **Displacement:** Many outed individuals flee to Kenya to seek asylum. Those with the option flee further abroad; LGBTQIA+ refugees and IDPs lack safe coping mechanisms or access to aid and face discrimination.

Community Identified Priorities

Health

- Confidential HIV/STI testing and treatment partnerships with vetted, queer-friendly doctors
- Peer-network distribution of condoms and lubricants

Mental Health

- Counselling and psychological first-aid training for LGBTQIA+ groups
- Recruit and train LGBTQIA+-competent counsellors working in local languages from the community or diaspora

Shelter

- Rapid relocation and emergency shelter for those facing imminent threat
- Safe spaces for LBQ women
- Low-visibility community spaces in Addis Ababa and in the regions

Livelihoods and Education

- Microgrants and seed funding for income-generating activities
- Support livelihoods and education programmes already run by LGBTQIA+ organisations

Protection

- Cash assistance for emergency protection needs
- Legal aid for arrested individuals
- Documentation of conflict-related sexual violence against LGBTQIA+ survivors

LGBTQIA+ civil society persists in Ethiopia, despite the difficult context. These organisations continue evolving and innovating to find ways to navigate the security environment and serve their community – but are in urgent need of resources and support.