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

SITUATION REPORT

LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES DURING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Nigeria – Malawi – Burundi – Kenya – Uganda - Democratic Republic of Congo – Regional Developments

January 2026

International PRIDE Centre (January 2026), Embracing LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Workshop, Nairobi Kenya

The PRIDE Centre (Protection, Rights, Inclusion in Displacement & Emergencies) provides legal and policy analysis, preparedness, and programming tools for emergency response agencies to ensure inclusive programming for LGBTQIA+ persons in emergency, humanitarian, and development settings. For questions about this report or to discuss how the PRIDE Centre may be able to support your operations, please contact InternationalPrideCentre@pridecentre.org.

This is the third PRIDE Centre Situation Report, reporting on the conditions for the LGBTQIA+ community living in humanitarian crises during the period of August to December 2025. This report includes updated analyses of PRIDE Centre's six target countries, and other significant developments across the region such as Ghana, movements to South Sudan.

The PRIDE Centre is rooted in a foundation of anti-racism and aid decolonisation across all outputs and operations. We embrace SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) communities in all their diversity, inclusive of indigenous understandings of non-CIS sexual identity and gender expression and identity.

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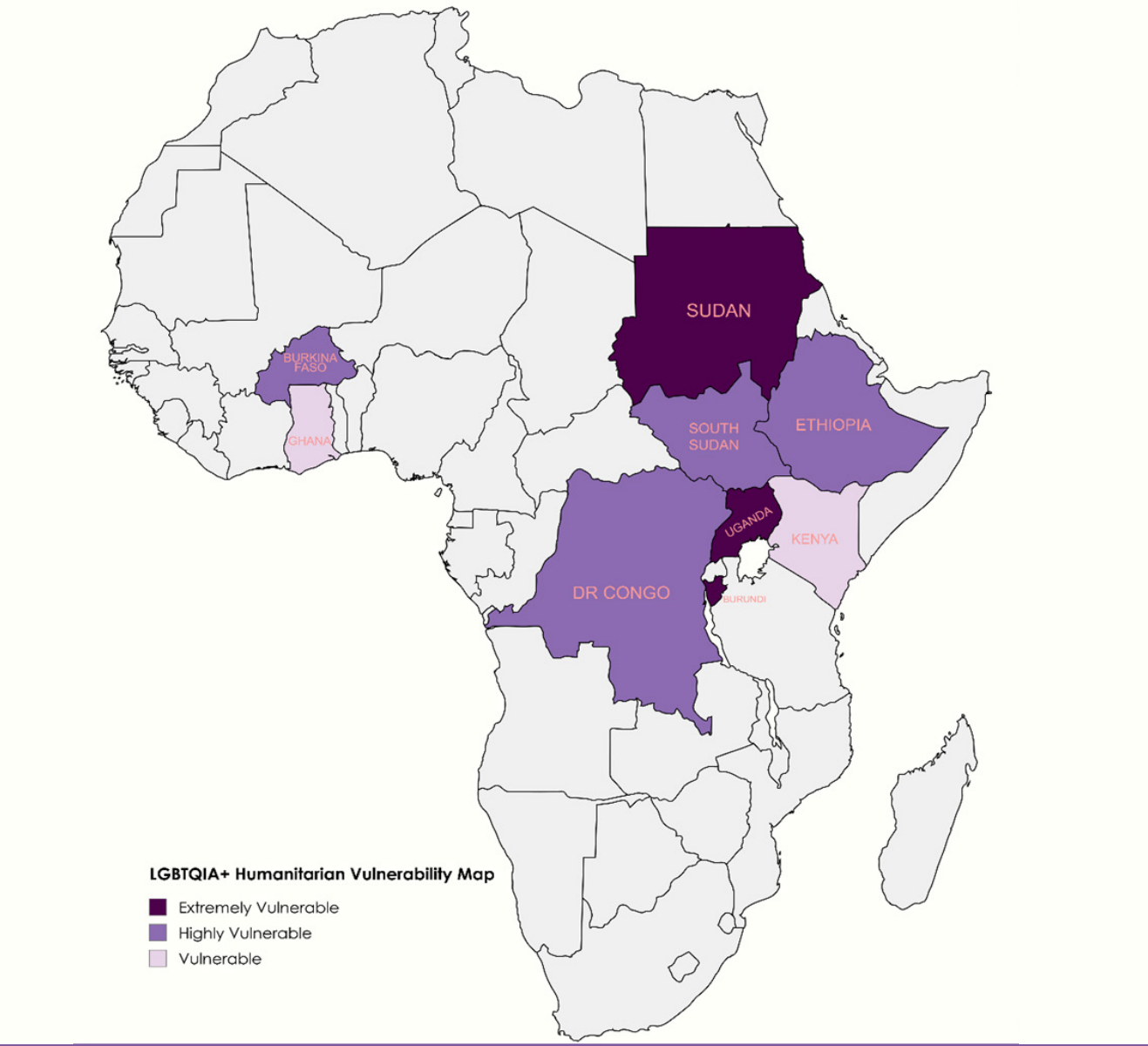
1 Humanitarian conditions for LGBTQIA+ persons in sub-Saharan Africa



The methodology for assessing LGBTQIA+ challenges in humanitarian crises in the above map, is based on ten key indicators, including legal environment, access to services, incidents of violence, and inclusion in humanitarian programming and more. Data is gathered from Government, UN, NGOs, research entities, media, and direct interviews, focusing on the 2023–2025 period. The PRIDE Centre acknowledges that LGBTQIA+ Vulnerability is not uniform across countries, and the score for a country may not reflect the level of vulnerability in each region/province. As such, the score here should be considered as a country average. The results are visualized using MapChart. net, and are categorized into three risk levels based on total vulnerability scores. The countries presented above are the focus countries of the PRIDE Centre.

Regional Developments

Ghanaian anti-LGBTQIA+ Bill

On 18 November 2025, Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama stated his administration's commitment to enacting the draft *Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill ('the Bill')*. If passed, the Bill will become the only piece of legislation in the world to criminalise simply identifying as a same gender-attracted person. The Bill would also criminalise identifying as an ally (which it defines as someone who 'supports or advocates for the queer community'), and even 'sympathising' with LGBTQ+ individuals. The Bill imposes mandatory reporting – meaning that anyone in Ghana who knows another person who is queer, or knows of someone who is supportive or sympathetic to a queer person, would be legally required to report this person to the police. These provisions violate the Ghanaian constitution and multiple regional and international laws.

The PRIDE Centre estimates that over 1 million of Ghana's population (5%) are from a SOGIESC minority. A 2011 survey found that 1.5% of the population identifies as being LGBTQIA+. Even taking this lower estimate, the Act would automatically criminalise over 300,000 Ghanaians, making them liable to a 3-year prison sentence. If the Bill is passed, humanitarian and development organisations operating in Ghana and the wider region will need to urgently prepare for a substantial increase in both internal and cross-border displacement, as LGBTQIA+ persons are likely toseek asylum in neighbouring countries and further abroad. A full PRIDE Centre analysis of the draft Bill, including recommendations for aid organisations, can be found here.

In October, Ghana's Parliament received a Ugandan delegation seeking to have Ghana host the next "Interparliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty"—a Western-funded anti-rights gathering linked to recognised hate groups—amid the re-introduction of Ghana's anti-LGBTQIA+ bill. The conference holds rallies, often led by far-right political activists from Europe and the US, and organises workshops including drafting anti-LGBTQIA+ rights legislation, prohibiting women's reproductive choice, sexual and reproductive health, and prevention of gender-based violence initiatives.

Movement of LGBTQIA+ refugees to South Sudan

Information and rumours circulating within LGBTQIA+ refugee and asylum-seeking communities in East Africa are driving a rapidly escalating and dangerous pattern of movement to South Sudan. Rumours that refugee registration and resettlement to Canada is being fast-tracked specifically for LGBTQIA+ refugees in South Sudan have prompted substantial numbers of people to travel toward Juba and Gorom refugee camp, often via high-risk transit routes.

The International PRIDE Centre (January 2026): Interview with Trans refugees, Kenya.

The PRIDE Centre has received reports directly from LGBTQIA+ refugees that several hundred Ugandan LGBTQIA+ refugees previously based in Kenya have already moved

to South Sudan, with many transiting through Uganda. Refugees currently in Uganda are also undertaking this journey, while shelters in Kenya report an increase in new arrivals from Uganda seeking asylum registration with the explicit intention of onward movement back through Uganda to reach South Sudan. Community members in Nairobi, Nakuru, Mombasa, and Kakuma are actively seeking information and community leaders report that many are actively making travel plans.

This movement is being further fuelled by WhatsApp audio messages circulating widely among queer refugee networks in the region. One such message, recently received by The PRIDE Centre, features an unidentified Lugana speaker currently in Juba/Gorom urging LGBTQIA+ people to come urgently, claiming that Canada has opened resettlement for 4,000 queer refugees and that a UN official is facilitating the process. These messages are being shared in groups with over 100 members and are treated as highly credible.

The PRIDE Centre is deeply concerned that inaccurate information is driving large-scale, spontaneous movement, exposing LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers to extreme protection risks, including arrest, extortion, violence, and exploitation during border crossings and transit through Uganda, Turkana, and South Sudan. Without urgent, community-led communication and LGBTQIA+-sensitive response measures along transit and destination routes, this situation risks rapidly deteriorating into a protection crisis. The PRIDE Centre has circulated memoranda regarding this movement and has called on donors to fund meaningful community-led communications and outreach to help inform decisions about movement with accurate and verified information. The PRIDE Centre has also called for response actors in South Sudan and on transit routes in Uganda to ensure that all response modalities and staff are LGBTQIA+ appropriate and sensitised.

Burkina Faso's New Anti-Homosexuality Law

On 1 September 2025, Burkina Faso's military government approved anti-LGBTQIA+ amendments to the country's Code of Persons and Family (CPF), marking the first time conduct related to homosexuality has been criminalised in Burkina Faso. The amendments lack clarity – though they have been widely reported in the media as criminalising same sex intimacy, they do not do so explicitly. Instead, using vague language, they prohibit the 'promotion' of 'homosexual practices and related conduct'. The amendments also introduce new language requiring parents to choose the sex of the child before the birth can be legally registered, creating a risk of statelessness and increasing likelihood of invasive medical procedures on intersex infants. The Code provides that non-nationals who do not comply with its terms will be liable to deportation.

The PRIDE Centre has produced an in-depth analysis of these amendments, which – in addition to violating the Burkinabe constitution and international law – are beset by numerous jurisdictional and technical issues which make it unclear if and how they will be enforced. This analysis also assesses the impact of the amendments on the ability of aid organisations to carry out programming which is inclusive of people with diverse SOGIESC. It is the assessment of The PRIDE Centre that such programming continues to be legal in most circumstances, and can and should be carried out following careful risk assessments.

Displacement and humanitarian need: statistics and LGBTQIA+ estimates

	Refugees & asylum seekers***		IDPs***		Returnees (IDP / refugee)		Crisis or emergency level food insecurity (IPC)**	
Country	**Total**	**Estimated LGBTQIA+***	**Total**	**Estimated LGBTQIA+**	**Total**	**Estimated LGBTQIA+**	**Total**	**Estimated LGBTQIA+**
Nigeria	141,396	7,070	3,544,519	177,226	26,462	1,323	30,624,465	1,531,223
Malawi	57,438	2,872	135,880	6,794	Not Available	Not Available	4,009,537	200,477
Burundi	111,841	5,592	92,227	4,611	20,000	1,000	1,800,242	90,012
Kenya	854,876	42,744	285,000	14,250	9,800	490	2,200,000	110,000
Uganda	1,971,983	98,599	21,700	1,085	10,284	514	1,420,000	71,000
DRC	504,416	25,221	5,345,372	267,268	4,091,133	204,556	24,812,000	1,240,600
Ethiopia	1,125,068	56,253	3,135,000	156,750	2,813,489	140,674	Not Available	Not Available
Burkina Faso	42,467	2,123	2,065,800	103,290	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Mali	174,020	8,701	402,167	20,108	195,133	9,756	1,473,095	73,905
Niger	938,926	46,946	459,585	22,979	Not Available	Not Available	2,220,927	111,046
Mozambique	23,955	1,198	609,243	30,462	Not Available	Not Available	2,090,000	104,500
Ghana	32,307	1,615	3,837	191	Not Available	Not Available	2,018,672	100,933
Sudan	860,909	43,045	9,584,349	479,217	2,600,000	130,000	19,206,275	960,314
South Sudan	595,641	29,782	1,992,513	99,625	1,757,691	87,884	5,856,647	292,832
TOTAL	**7,432,370**	**371,617**	**27,655,492**	**1,386,630**	**11,523,992**	**576,199**	**97,731,860**	**4,886,842**

* In the absence of demographic data in the countries of operation, The PRIDE Centre conservatively estimates that 5% of disaster-affected populations are SOGIESC minorities.
**We have used the Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications 3 and higher (IPC) because it is common measurement standard applicable across each of our focus countries (unlike the UNOCHA classification of 'people in need', for example, which is only available in countries with humanitarian programme cycles). It should be noted however that the IPC statistics for Uganda include only the refugee hosting regions – not the entirety of the country.
***Refugee related data is drawn from UNCHR, and IDP data is drawn from UNHCR or (where not available on UNHCR public domains) the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

Nigeria

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
141,396 refugees, mostly from Cameroon	7,070 LGBTQIA+ refugees
3.54 million Internally Displaced Persons	177,226 LGBTQIA+ Internally Displaced Persons
5 million people affecting by flooding in 2025	250,000 LGBTQIA+ people affected by flooding in 2025
11,247 cholera cases in 2025	562 LGBTQIA+ people with cholera in 2025
30.6 million in crisis or emergency level food insecurity	1.53 million LGBTQIA+ people in crisis or emergency level food insecurity
5.9 million people categorised as being in humanitarian need by OCHA in the GHO 2026	295,000 LGBTQIA+ people in humanitarian need
227.9 million total population	11.4 million LGBTQIA+ Nigerians

The PRIDE Centre conducted field research in May 2025 in Nigeria, including interviews and focus group discussions with over 65 individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community, civil society organisations (CSO) representatives and humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian needs in Nigeria are escalating as the country enters 2026. Internal displacement remains high and protracted; the north continues to be beset by conflict and insecurity; widespread flooding has impacted an estimated 5 million people across the country; and disease outbreaks persist in vulnerable regions. Nigeria is also facing one of the world's largest hunger crises, which the WFP estimating that up to 35 million Nigerians could face severe food insecurity in 2026. Famine-like conditions are predicted to occur during the 2026 lean season in the country's northeast.

Aid agencies in the country report that no known attempts have been made to proactively include SOGIESC minorities in humanitarian, refugee, IDP or protracted displacement programming to date. Aid personnel interviewed by the PRIDE Centre reported that this is due to a lack of awareness about the locations, identities, or needs of these populations; security concerns; a perception that programming for these populations would contravene Nigerian law; and social and cultural barriers to discussing the issue amongst both affected populations and organisational staff.

The LGBTQIA+ community live in a climate of fear. Fear of violence, lynching, and arbitrary arrests. A pervasive challenge is the rise of 'kito,' an extortion tactic involving kidnapping, doxxing, and physical violence by both police and non-state actors who use the law to justify their crimes. Economically, community members are frequently shut out

of the formal job market due to their gender expression or perceived identity, leading to high rates of unemployment and reliance on sex work. Access to essential services is severely constrained; individuals face discrimination in healthcare settings, where staff often use religious narratives to deny care, breach confidentiality, or attempt 'conversion' practices. This crisis is exacerbated by recent international funding cuts that have led to the closure of many specialised One-Stop Shops (OSS), cutting off critical access to PREP, condoms, and psychosocial support (PSS).

Legal, policy and political context updates

The PRIDE Centre Nigeria Legal Analysis is available here. Since the last Situation Report, the legal framework in Nigeria remains unchanged. In 2025, both Boko Haram and ISWAP escalated attacks on Nigerian military bases, patrols, and villages, prompting sustained military operations in the northeast states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY). These insurgent groups also increased their attacks on civilians in the BAY region throughout the year. 2025 also saw an increase in mass abductions across the northwest of the country. The Trump administration has framed ongoing insecurity in northern Nigeria as evidence of a "Christian genocide". On Christmas Day 2025, the US military carried out airstrikes in northwest Sokoto state, in what was presented by the Nigerian government and US Africa Command as a coordinated operation with Nigerian authorities. President Trump has indicated that more strikes remain possible if violence in Nigeria persists, linking it to alleged persecution of Christians — a claim the Nigerian government rejects.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

As of December 2025, OCHA estimates that there are 5.9 million people in humanitarian need in Nigeria. Applying The PRIDE Centre's conservative estimate that 5% of any population belongs to a SOGIESC minority suggests that this number includes at least 295,000 LGBTQIA+ individuals. WFP's estimates of the number of people who will face severe insecurity in 2026 go far beyond these numbers, however, to an estimated 35 million people – including an estimated 1.75 million from the LGBTQIA+ community.

The experiences of SOGIESC minorities in these regions are not well documented – but in interviews with northern-based LGBTQIA+ organisations, staff reported to the PRIDE Centre that it is common for this population to flee southward in search of safety. During the course of its field research, the PRIDE Centre has identified only two organisations providing any services to displaced LGBTQIA+ individuals: one Cameroonian refugee-led organisation in the southeast and a women's organisation in the north. Neither organisation is LGBTQIA+-led, and their work supporting small groups of women is unfunded. The PRIDE Centre has not been able to identify any organization – whether humanitarian or LGBTQIA+-focused – that supports LGBTQIA+ communities affected by flood, food insecurity, or other humanitarian crises.

Malawi

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
57,438 refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people and returnees within the country mostly from the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda	2,872 LGBTQIA+ refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people and returnees
135,880 Internally Displaced Persons	6,794 LGBTQIA+ Internally Displaced Persons
4,009,537 people in 'emergency' or 'crisis' levels of food insecurity	200,477 LGBTQIA+ people in 'emergency' or 'crisis' levels of food insecurity
Total host population: 21 million	1,050,000 LGBTQIA+ people in the host population
The Global Humanitarian Overview 2026, does not include statistics regarding the numbers of estimated people in need in Malawi	

The PRIDE Centre conducted field outreach in March 2025 in Malawi, and conducted interviews and focus group discussions with over 60 individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community and humanitarian actors.

Humanitarian needs in Malawi are rapidly escalating as the country enters 2026. The emergency lean season is driving severe food insecurity, with the latest IPC results projecting that 4 million people will face Crisis-level (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity and a further 8,000 Emergency-level (IPC Phase 4) conditions between October 2025 and March 2026. In October 2025, the President declared a State of Disaster in 11 districts, followed by the launch of the Government's 2025-2026 Lean Season Food Insecurity Response Programming targeting four million people nationwide. Humanitarian partners seek to scale up assistance, but funding gaps remain significant.

Legal, policy and political context updates

The PRIDE Centre Malawi Legal Analysis is available here. Malawi's human rights record was reviewed by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group in November 2025, marking the country's fourth review since its last examination in 2020. The Working Group and participating States were keen to hear responses on priority issues relating to refugees and migrants, the operating environment for civil society, and protections for LGBTQIA+ persons. The Working Group has not yet issued its feedback or recommendations on Malawi's human rights record. Malawi held general elections in September 2025, covering presidential, parliamentary, and local government polls. The elections recorded strong voter participation and were

conducted in a generally peaceful and orderly manner, with national authorities and regional and international observers noting the overall credibility of the process. Former President Peter Mutharika was elected as President following the polls.

Malawi continued progress on revising its Refugees Act through a consultative process led by the Special Law Commission on the Review of the Refugees Act, with support from the Government of Malawi and UNHCR. Following extensive consultations throughout 2025, the commission convened a National Validation Conference in December 2025, bringing together key stakeholders to validate findings and proposed reforms. Discussions focused on the definition of refugee status, institutional arrangements for refugee status determination, protection and management of asylum seekers and refugees, rights and obligations, and pathways for cessation or naturalisation. Civil society organisations actively contributed through submissions and statements, emphasising alignment with international and constitutional standards and the need to safeguard refugee dignity, due process and self-reliance as the review moves towards finalisation.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

Research by the PRIDE Centre highlights that LGBTQIA+ persons in Malawi operate in a humanitarian environment that is marked by intersecting vulnerabilities. Malawi is a multi-hazard context with significant internal displacement and a growing refugee and asylum-seeker population. The primary barriers to safety and access to assistance stem from widespread stigma, discrimination and violence. LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers reported harassment, physical attacks, and sexual violence, especially in Dzaleka refugee camp, where trans refugees face especially severe abuse. Discrimination by other camp residents and service providers restricts access to food distribution, health care, education, livelihoods programmes, and protection services. Many LGBTQIA+ refugees conceal their identities to avoid harm, limiting their ability to seek support and increasing isolation and psychosocial distress.

Challenges are further compounded by criminalisation of same-sex relations, police harassment, and arbitrary arrests, alongside the denial of medical treatment and exclusion from educational opportunities. In humanitarian settings, LGBTQIA+ persons report violence during aid distribution, eviction from shelters, and confiscation of documentation by officials, deepening insecurity and fear of approaching authorities or humanitarian providers. Urgent priorities include ensuring safe and confidential access to protection services, health care, psychosocial support, and livelihoods opportunities; establishing safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ persons in displacement settings; strengthening referral pathways for survivors of violence; and improving access to education and economic inclusion.

Burundi

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
111,841 refugees and asylum within the country, as of October 2025, including.	5,592 LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers, including.
20,000 returnees	1,000 LGBTQIA+ returnees
92,227 IDPs	4,611 LGBTQIA+ IDPs
1.8 million people are in the 'crisis' phase of food insecurity (phase 3).	90,012 LGBTQIA+ people in 'crisis' levels of food insecurity.
Total host population: 14.4 million	720,000 LGBTQIA+ people in the host population.
The Global Humanitarian Overview 2026, does not include statistics regarding the numbers of estimated people in need in Burundi.	

The PRIDE Centre conducted field outreach in May 2025 in Burundi, and conducted interviews and focus group discussions with over 40 individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community and humanitarian actors. Further PRIDE Centre Briefings on the Humanitarian Context in Burundi is available in English and French.

Applying the PRIDE Centre's conservative estimate that 5% of any population belongs to a SOGIESC minority, at least 5,592 LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers and around 4,611 internally displaced LGBTQIA+ persons are present in Burundi. LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations (CSOs) interviewed by the PRIDE Centre in 2025, reported that they are not formally involved in humanitarian programming or displacement responses due to legal constraints, lack of funding, and fear of reprisals.

Many LGBTQIA+ individuals reported to the PRIDE Centre that they are forced to avoid public and private health facilities due to stigma, harassment, and denial of care, relying instead on a small number of trusted providers or peer networks. Access to education is also restricted: LGBTQIA+ students face expulsion or denial of enrolment under a 2011 Ministry of Education directive that explicitly lists homosexuality as grounds for exclusion. In humanitarian settings, LGBTQIA+ people are largely invisible, as services are not designed to be inclusive or responsive to their needs. Transgender people face extreme violence, family rejection, and barriers to healthcare and legal documentation. LBQT women are at high risk of "corrective rape," forced marriage, and legal challenges related to child registration. LGBTQIA+ refugees, especially Congolese refugees in camps, are often inaccessible to local CSOs, while displaced and climate-affected populations may be excluded from formal aid mechanisms.

Legal, policy and political context updates

Burundi's legal, political, and social environment for LGBTQIA+ people is highly restrictive and hostile, despite the presence of a few limited protective provisions.

The legal framework criminalises consensual same-sex relations under the Penal Code, with penalties of up to two years' imprisonment and fines. Broad and vaguely defined offences such as "indecency," promoting "debauchery," or distributing materials "contrary to good morals" are frequently used to target LGBTQIA+ individuals and activists, while loosely framed forgery provisions can be applied against transgender people. Some policies offer limited safeguards, such as the national HIV and AIDS policy and the Labour Code, which prohibits discrimination related to political or philosophical opinions and HIV status. Civil society space is tightly controlled, with NGOs facing heavy regulation and oversight. The justice system is widely perceived as inaccessible and unsafe for LGBTQIA+ people. Most PRIDE Centre interviewees repeatedly stated they would not report abuses to the police due to fear of harassment, arrest, or inaction. While arbitrary arrests for same-sex conduct were previously rare, police harassment and extortion were common, and incidents of arbitrary detention appear to have increased since the 2023 mass arrest of individuals accused of "promoting homosexuality." Senior government officials, including the President, have publicly described homosexuality as a "curse" and endorsed extreme rhetoric, while a past National Security Council decision classified homosexuality as a threat to national security. State surveillance is pervasive, creating fear and discouraging activism, and LGBTQIA+ communities are frequently scapegoated during politically sensitive periods.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

The mainstream humanitarian sector remains largely disengaged, often describing itself as "LGBTQIA-blind" due to limited capacity, lack of data, and fear of state retaliation. As a result, the most vulnerable groups—particularly transgender individuals, who face heightened persecution and visibility-related risks, and LGBTQIA+ refugees isolated within camps—are almost entirely excluded from formal humanitarian assistance. Displacement poses unique challenges for SOGIESC minorities, including difficulties accessing livelihoods, finding affirming healthcare, and rebuilding social support networks. Discrimination in healthcare, education, employment, and access to justice drives poverty, invisibility, and reliance on informal coping strategies, leaving LGBTQIA+ individuals and organisations focused on survival rather than advocacy. Isolated examples of informal collaboration with international actors exist, but these cases rely on personal awareness rather than structured referral pathways. Urgent needs identified by the LGBTQIA+ community include, mental health and psychosocial support, transport assistance for peers, legal aid to address police harassment, and advocacy support. While risks remain high, international partners are relatively better positioned to support inclusive programming and could play a vital role by partnering with local LGBTQIA+ organisations to extend assistance to displaced and crisis-affected populations.

Kenya

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
854,876 refugees and asylum seekers inside the country, primarily from Somalia and South Sudan	42,744 LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers
285,000 internally displaced people (IDPs)	14,250 LGBTQIA+ IDPs
2.2 million people in crisis or emergency stages of food insecurity	110,000 LGBTQIA+ people in crisis or emergency stages of food insecurity
53.3 million in the host population.	2.6 million LGBTQIA+ people in the host population

The PRIDE Centre conducted field outreach in September and October 2025 in Kenya, and conducted interviews and focus group discussions with over 180 individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community and humanitarian actors.

Kenya's humanitarian situation remains fragile as food insecurity, public health threats, and displacement pressures converge. As of late 2025, food insecurity has risen sharply, with an estimated 2.1 to 2.5 million people facing hunger. Pastoral and arid counties have been disproportionately impacted throughout 2025, weakening household resilience and pushed many families into Crisis-level food insecurity (IPC Phase 3). In October 2025, Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) was confirmed in Jinka, southern Ethiopia, prompting concerns over potential cross-border spillover into northern Kenya. Attention has focused on northern border counties, including Turkana and Marsabit counties, where frequent cross-border movement, informal migration routes, and proximity to refugee-hosting areas elevating the risk of transmission among host communities, refugees, and asylum seekers, further straining an already limited health and humanitarian response capacity.

Legal, policy and political context updates

A Kenyan High Court in November 2025 issued conservatory orders suspending a government directive of July 2025 that halted the registration of Eritrean and Ethiopian asylum seekers. The Court found the petition brought by Human Rights organisations, raised arguable constiutional and legal issues and warned that allowing the directive to stand risked ongoing violence of refugee rights, including protection from refoulment. Pending the determination of the main petition, the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs was prohibited from implementing the directive.

Following field research by the PRIDE Centre, further Kenyan Legal Analysis is available here. Kenya's legal framework continues to criminalise consensual same-sex relations between men under its Penal Code, which is used to legitimise harassment, extortion,

and arbitrary arrest of individuals. Ongoing constitutional petitions challenging the provisions of the Penal Code, remain before the courts, with hearings continuing into 2026. The proposed Family Protection Bill (2023) reflects a broader political trend toward entrenching conservative conceptions through placing restrictions on expressions of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, including advocacy. Although not yet enacted, it has fueled public and parliamentary debates that have further emboldened anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric in political and religious spaces.

In interviews facilitated by The PRIDE Centre, LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers expressed anxiety about the Shirika Plan. They pointed out that the rights to work and freedom of movement under the plan are reserved for refugees – not asylum seekers, which accounts for the majority of those who have arrived in Kenya since 2018. Though these asylum seekers will not be able to benefit from the new rights conferred under the plan, they will still be required to integrate with the local communities in the regions of Kenya where the camps are based.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

Refugee-led LGBTQIA+ organisations and shelters report that resources that once covered rent, food, emergency healthcare and protection services have been significantly depleted following donor funding cuts in 2025. LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers and refugees within Kakuma continue to face high risks of violence and discrimination, while those who leave the camps for urban safe houses are cut off from regular humanitarian aid and formal service provision. Safe houses are overstretched, humanitarian actors have limited reach in urban areas, and specialized protection services for LGBTQIA+ persons in need remain scarce. Without renewed and targeted support to refugee-led organisations and inclusive humanitarian programming, LGBTQIA+ population in need, continue to face compounded risks of food insecurity, unsafe shelters, interrupted healthcare, exposure to violence, and unaddressed psychosocial trauma.

International PRIDE Centre (Jan 2026); Focus Group Discussion with Trans CSO in Kenya.'

Uganda

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
1,971,983 refugees and asylum seekers, mostly from: South Sudan, DRC, Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia, Burundi	98,599 LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers
1.42 million – People at Crisis and Emergency levels of Food Insecurity (incl. Refugees)	4,900 LGBTQIA+ IDPs
2.2 million in humanitarian need	47,650 LGBTQIA+ people in refugee-hosting districts at Emergency or Crisis levels of food insecurity
48.6 million in the host population	2.43 million LGBTQIA+ people in the host population

Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa and the fourth largest in the world (fifth, when including Germany). UNHCR projects the population of refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda to grow to 2.24 million in 2026.

In 2025 the Government of Uganda announced that it would stop registering refugees from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The sharp decline in international funding was cited as a core factor in the decision, alongside security concerns and strain on local resources. This Minister responsible also made a statement that refugee registration was to be halted due to a lack of wars in these three countries, and government officials have also indicated that it is considering halting registration from other countries no longer engaged in active conflict. Such moves mark a substantial shift in Uganda's remarkable 'open door' policy to refugees. All the more remarkable is the fact that this shift is directly attributable to ongoing cuts in donor funding. The Government of Uganda had hinted at such moves for several years before making this policy change, directly challenging the international community to fulfill their funding commitment under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and Global Compact on Refugees. Such a shift, particularly if applied to additional countries, could lead to substantial involuntary return movements which could threaten to further destabilise several already fragile countries in the region.

In November, dozens were killed in landslides in eastern areas of the country. Climate disasters routinely lead to the evacuation and displacement of thousands of people from mountainous and highland regions, with substantial follow-on impacts to education, health, protection, and worsening conditions of poverty and food security. Local displacement introduces further, and extraordinary, vulnerabilities for LGBTQIA+ persons caught up in this forced movement and often leads to further, deeply unsafe forced migration to urban areas and neighbouring countries.

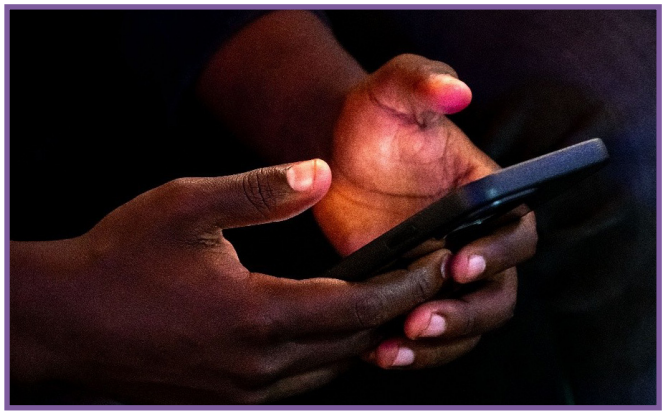
Legal, policy and political context updates

In the months leading Uganda's January 2026 elections there have been unofficial reports of increased raids on LGBTQIA+ persons and gatherings. The PRIDE Centre has received reports from international observers that raids have been increasingly carried out by military units. Previously, raids were predominantly carried out by police, who primarily use arrests and detentions as a tool for extortion. The use of the military for these purposes demonstrates both the increased and national-level targeting of these communities, and a more coordinated and nationally directed campaign.

Analyses from rights-based actors is that this is related to a broader crackdown on all civil society across the country in the lead up to elections based on unfounded assumptions that any civil society groupings or activism are linked to government opposition. An example of this broader crackdown can be seen in the detention and temporary disappearance of a Catholic Priest in December. Two weeks later, on 14 December, the UPDF confirmed that it was holding Father Deusdedit Ssekabira "for involvement in violent subversive activities" and planned to charge him in court. This follows on the disappearance of two Kenyan human rights activists who were abducted and held for 38 days without charge or acknowledgement before being returned to Kenya; and the abduction in November 2024 of Opposition Leader Kizza Besigye while in Nairobi. In December, the Director of the Center for Constitutional Governance was arrested and charged with "unlawfully obtaining or disclosing personal data" and interrogated for making social media posts critical of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The activist, Sarah Bireete, remains in detention pending a bail hearing. In October, Uganda's Nation Media Group was banned from covering parliament, following on an earlier ban from the group covering presidential events.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

The atmosphere of fear has notably worsened in late 2025, with LGBTQIA+ refugees regularly appealing directly to The PRIDE Centre for assistance, guidance, and advice. The murder of a trans Ugandan in November, footage of which was circulated on social media, sent renewed terror through the community. Trans refugees have reported to the PRIDE Centre that they fear going outside, and even using mobile phones, for fear of being found out. This has led to serious issues regarding mental health, access to food and essential medicine, and resources in response to sexual and gender based violence. The PRIDE Centre assisted members of the community in accessing safe and secure



The International PRIDE Centre (January 2026): Ugandan Trans Refugees, Kenya.

shelter and minor medical assistance for five months through private outreach and fundraising. The PRIDE Centre has recorded multiple issues with regards to access to humanitarian assistance by LGBTQIA+ refugees in Uganda. Challenges have been reported by refugees living both in Kampala and in refugee settlements, and include members of the trans, gay, lesbian, and bi communities. The PRIDE Centre wishes to clarify that we do not believe and do not allege that any incidents of services being denied to SOGIESC refugees are the result of organisational discrimination or policy. We regret that past reports may have given this mistaken impression. We believe that

incidents described are predominantly the result of homophobia and transphobia of individuals who work in varying capacities and varying levels of seniority among staff, partners, and contractors, alongside issues in training, sensitization, and awareness. The PRIDE Centre does not censor survivors' perspectives, and testimonies are accepted and reported as evidence.

In interviews conducted in late 2025, members of the LGBTQIA+ community noted improvements in the levels of respect and treatment that they have received from humanitarian agencies over the previous year. One interviewee stated that “75% of staff” responded to them respectfully, and having designated staff to engage with had resulted in improved treatment and reduced discrimination from NGO and UNHCR staff. However, LGBTQIA+ refugees interviewed by the PRIDE Centre universally report challenges with the UNHCR helpline and email channel, including in cases of urgent medical needs. In correspondence with the PRIDE Centre during the reporting period, UNHCR Uganda have requested further information, analysis, and coordination with The PRIDE Centre to the issues raised. Several LGBTQIA+ interviewees also noted that the regular fora held by one NGO for LGBTQIA+ refugees to meet and discuss issues has provided a positive space for raising issues in a supportive environment.

In a Focus Group Discussion in September 2025, one refugee noted "it doesn’t matter which. I have been to them all: ***[AGENCY NAMES REDACTED]. When you say you are transgender, they won’t open the door***." Access to medical services continues to be identified as a critical issue by almost all individuals interviewed. Others reported that they are told to proceed to Mulago Hospital for treatment. Several reported that they have been asked by NGO and UN staff to provide a police report and/or letters from their local government Chairman to apply for assistance, ***but that obtaining these is impossible because of the likelihood that it would result in arrest and/or further violence***. One trans refugee reported that following an attack, they had obtained a police report as advised by a UNHCR staff member. However, they said that they were now in increased danger as the police now know their trans identity and had also have their address and contact.

Most acts of violence and sexual violence against members of the LGBTQIA+ community go unreported due to the risk of arrest and extortion. Furthermore, survivors of LGBTQIA+ targeted violence are reluctant to seek medical attention in Uganda due to reports of arrest, degrading treatment, and discrimination when attempting to access health facilities. LGBTQIA+ refugees generally view UN Agencies and international NGOs as their only option for safe reporting and urgent care. The PRIDE Centre continues to propose and advocate for the adoption of online, safe and informed AI, and telehealth programming options for healthcare triage, mental health, and resources for sexual and gender-based violence survivors.

The International PRIDE Centre (January 2026); Photo Workshop with LGBTQIA+ refugees in Kenya

DRC

Humanitarian overview

Humanitarian Overview and Displacement Statistics	Projected minimum number of LGBTQIA+ people affected
504,416 refugees and asylum seekers are in the DRC	25,221 LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers
5.3 million Internally Displaced Persons	267,268 LGBTQIA+ Internally Displaced Persons
24.8 million with acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above}	1.2 million LGBTQIA+ people with acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above}
14.9 million people are classified as 'people in need' by OCHA in 2026	745,000 LGBTQIA+ people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2026
Total host population: 112.8 million people	5,640,000 LGBTQIA+ people in the host population

The PRIDE Centre conducted field research in November 2025 in DRC, including interviews and focus group discussions with 88 individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community and humanitarian actors.

Since July 2025, violence in the eastern provinces persisted despite diplomatic efforts, leading to large-scale displacement. 500,000 people were displaced in South Kivu alone in December 2025–January 2026. As of mid-2025, over 3 million displaced persons had returned home, particularly in North and South Kivu. However, returnees often face dire conditions, with limited access to services, shelter, and livelihoods.

On 20 July 2025, the Government of the DRC and the Congo River Alliance/March 23 Movement (AFC/M23) signed a Declaration of Principles in Doha. The agreement committed the parties to a ceasefire, the establishment of a joint verification mechanism, the voluntary and dignified return of IDPs and refugees, and inclusive dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict. This process was followed by a Tripartite Commission meeting in July 2025, which focused on refugee repatriation. However, the ceasefire has remained fragile, with continued clashes. The UN Security Council has responded by extending MONUSCO's mandate, citing the ongoing insecurity and the need for international support to monitor ceasefire commitments.

LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations (CSOs) interviewed by the PRIDE Centre in 2025, reported systemic issues such as family rejection, social stigma, and violent physical attacks, which frequently lead to economic instability and barriers to essential education and healthcare.

Legal, policy and political context updates

While same-sex relations in DRC are not criminalised per se, public expressions of af-

fection between same-sex couples, such as kissing, may be prosecuted under public decency provisions of the Penal Code. These offences carry penalties ranging from eight days to three years' imprisonment and/or fines, and they are often applied in a discretionary manner, creating a climate of legal uncertainty and vulnerability for LGBTQIA+ individuals. At the same time, several laws provide partial and indirect protections, however, enforcement remains weak, and protections very rarely translate into meaningful safety or equality in practice.

The political environment for LGBTQIA+ individuals in DRC is increasingly hostile, driven by high-level government opposition and pervasive religious influence. Authorities exploit Article 171 (or 167) of the Penal Code regarding "immorality" to justify arbitrary arrests, detention, and extortion. Public rhetoric from officials, notably a former Minister of Justice, has incited societal "manhunts," portraying LGBTQI+ identities as "imported European values" that threaten authentic Congolese culture. In 2024, the same public figure publicly called for the prosecution of homosexuals—despite no legal basis for such action—further fueling fear and impunity. Religious and "anti-gender" movements exert significant pressure on leaders, often causing the interpretation of laws to be based on moral opinion rather than legal statutes. In conflict-affected eastern regions, the total collapse of the rule of law has led to absolute impunity for rebels and military actors who have targeted the LGBTQIA+ and other vulnerable communities with violence, as reported by LGBTQIA+ activists to The PRIDE Centre.

LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian need

The PRIDE Centre field research reveals an increasingly hostile and precarious environment for LGBTQIA+ persons in the DRC, particularly in the East. LGBTQIA+ communities are often forced into isolation to ensure their safety and survival. LGBTQIA+ persons reported to The PRIDE Centre that the cessation of PEPFAR and USAID funding means that many are now forced to find resources to enter non-specialised clinics where they face significant discrimination and/or denial of service from medical staff. Transgender individuals face the highest risks due to identifiable gender expression, suffering frequent violence and arbitrary arrests under "immorality" laws. Due to widespread domestic hostility, activists advocate through foreign embassies and international human rights mechanisms.

Gender-based violence has surged, with a 38% increase in early 2025, though recognizing that LGBTQIA+ persons who are victims of GBV are most often afraid of reporting these crimes. In some frontline areas, nearly all GBV support structures have ceased. Violence and discrimination are intensifying, particularly in eastern DRC. Reported raids on shared LGBTQIA+ housing, arbitrary arrests, extortion by law enforcement, and growing digital surveillance are increasingly reported to the PRIDE Centre. Conservative religious rhetoric continues to drive social hostility. Local LGBTQIA+ organisations, often the only providers of safe and inclusive support, operate with extremely minimal resources and high security risks. Urgent priorities include enhanced protection in eastern DRC, inclusive health and mental health services, sustained support for LGBTQIA+ civil society organisations, legal assistance, safe pathways, and the establishment of protective facilities in displacement and reception settings.

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