

How to....Celebrate Pride at Work in Mixed or Hostile Legal Environments

In many African countries, laws and cultural norms for Pride celebrations to be muted, behind closed doors, or online. However, Pride is not only about parades and rainbow flags—it is about recognition, solidarity, and creating safe spaces for staff to feel valued and respected. NGOs, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and refugee-led organizations often make commitments to foster inclusion, but still need to balance these by prioritising staff safety and wellbeing.

This guide outlines diverse and varied discreet, secure, and meaningful ways to acknowledge Pride in your workplace, emphasizing awareness of local laws, cultural sensitivities, and staff security. Pride should be celebrated and facilitated all year round, not just during Pride month.

- **Why Celebrate?** Pride signals that your organization values diversity and supports LGBTQIA+ staff, even in restrictive contexts.
- **Safety First:** Always assess legal, social and cultural implications before planning any activity.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Never mandate involvement; ensure confidentiality.
- **Mixed Attitudes Are Normal:** Not all staff will be supportive—focus on creating safe spaces without forcing participation.

Practical Steps for Aid Organisations

1. Online Events

- Many NGOs and UN agencies host virtual Pride events, staff forums, and discussions for staff. Check internal communications protocols or contact regional or HQ coordinators or focal points for any tips or advice on how to host an online event.
- If your organization is not hosting an event, **ASK them to—and offer to help organize!**

2. Social Media

- Search for discreet online or invitation-only Pride events in your community.
- Avoid posting publicly if it could endanger staff or partners.

3. Partner with CSOs

- Even in restrictive countries, local LGBTQIA+ groups often hold safe, private events. They know best how to operate securely—consider joining or co-sponsoring.

4. Use Pronouns

- Adding pronouns (he/she/they) in email signatures is one of the easiest and safest ways to demonstrate solidarity.

5. Subtle Visual Signals

- If safe, allow optional and voluntary use of rainbow or trans flag pins, stickers or icons in email signatures. In most countries, this is not illegal—even if people often think it is.

6. Educational Activities

- Host private “Lunch & Learn” sessions on inclusion or allyship.
- Share curated articles, podcasts, or internal newsletters.

7. Confidential Feedback Channels

- Provide safe and anonymous ways for staff to share what makes them feel included.

Examples of Successful Aid Sector Pride Initiatives

- **Botswana & Eswatini Pride Walks:** Supported by UNAIDS and local NGOs, these events combined small marches with speeches at UN offices under themes like “*Still We Stand*” and “*Living Our Truth*”, emphasizing resilience and inclusion despite restrictive laws. [\[mambaonline.com\]](http://mambaonline.com)
- **East Africa Pride Support:** Organizations like *All Out* funded discreet Pride events in Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania, focusing on community empowerment and safety. [\[allout.org\]](http://allout.org)
- **UNDP Vision 2030 Consultation:** In Mauritius, UNDP and partners convened a closed-door consultation on LGBTI+ inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating how Pride can be reframed as policy dialogue in restrictive settings. [\[unsdg.un.org\]](http://unsdg.un.org)
- **Refugee-Led Initiatives:** Groups like *Hope for Refugees International* and the *Refugee Storytellers Collective* organize storytelling circles and virtual Pride sessions to create safe spaces for displaced LGBTQIA+ persons. [\[refugeeadv...acylab.org\]](http://refugeeadv...acylab.org), [\[hopeforrefugees.org\]](http://hopeforrefugees.org)

Additional Resources

- **The PRIDE Centre:** [Templates & Guidance](#)
- Stonewall: [7 Ways you can be an LGBTQ+ ally at work](#)

Checklist for Organizing Pride in Restrictive Environments

- [] **Assess Legal & Cultural Risks:** Review domestic laws and/or safety risks; consult HR/legal teams. Reference : [PRIDE Centre legal analysis documents](#) & [PRIDE Centre website](#).
- [] **Clarify Participation is Voluntary:** Do not mandate involvement.
- [] **Use Neutral Language:** Consider “Diversity & Inclusion Month” if explicit Pride references are an issue.
- [] **Secure Communication Channels:** Use internal platforms; avoid public social media.
- [] **Plan Low-Visibility Activities:** Online webinars, private discussions, pronoun use in signatures.
- [] **Protect Identities:** Avoid photos or tagging participants.
- [] **Engage Trusted Partners:** Work with vetted CSOs for safe collaboration.
- [] **Provide Anonymous Feedback Options:** Suggestion boxes or secure forms.
- [] **Prepare Crisis Protocols:** Have a plan if backlash occurs.
- [] **Prepare Pro-diversity Messages:** It is important to be prepared to defend diversity and celebrate diverse staff SOGIESC identities.
- [] **Share Resources:** Direct staff to [The PRIDE Centre](#) for information and guidance.