

LGBTQIA+ Needs in Displacement & Humanitarian Crises

February 2026

Sub-Saharan Africa

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Section 1. Introduction & Rationale

This report presents a critical analysis of the needs of LGBTQIA+ persons in humanitarian crises across Nigeria, Malawi and Burundi, as identified through data collected by the International PRIDE Centre between March and June 2025. Its purpose is to present the acute, multi-faceted needs faced by LGBTQIA+ communities in crises, drawing from firsthand testimony from local civil society organizations (CSOs) in Malawi, Nigeria, and Burundi.

To address these needs, this report analyses the repressive operating environment that exacerbates humanitarian needs. It details the specific, unmet needs of the community across protection, health, shelter and other sectors; explores the international humanitarian system and the particular role of CSOs; and provides a roadmap of actionable recommendations for humanitarian and development actors and CSOs to address this gaps. A deep understanding of the (often evolving) legal and social context is paramount to delivering principled humanitarian services. For LGBTQIA+

communities in Malawi, Nigeria, and Burundi, life is shaped by a convergence of discriminatory laws, social stigma, and a daily struggle to survive.

A needs analysis focused on LGBTQIA+ individuals in humanitarian crises is essential as this population is disproportionately vulnerable and excluded from mainstream humanitarian support, without adequate understanding of the scope of their needs during crises:

Double Marginalization: LGBTQIA+ refugees and IDPs are "doubly marginalized"—facing prejudice both for their displacement status and their diverse SOGIE.

Invisibility and Data Gaps: SOGIE issues are often neglected or intentionally omitted by humanitarian organizations, which lack policies, training, and SOGIE-disaggregated data collection. The community often hides its identity to survive.

Exclusion from Services: LGBTQIA+ people are consistently deprioritized for basic aid, shelter, and medical services. This exclusion drives them towards harmful coping mechanisms, such as sex work, and increases their vulnerability to disease and violence.

This needs analysis is intended to provide evidence-based insight into the specific and varied needs the LGBTQIA+ needs in crises in Malawi, Nigeria, DRC, Kenya, and Burundi in 2025 and 2026. It is a resource that can be utilised for (individual or collective) advocacy, strategic programming, decision-making and resource mobilization:

This needs assessment is intended to be used across multiple levels of the humanitarian system, supporting actors with different mandates but shared responsibilities for protection, dignity, and effective assistance.

For **local LGBTQIA+ organisations**, the assessment provides concrete evidence and community-informed data that can be used to strengthen strategic advocacy with humanitarian actors, governments, and donors where it is safe and appropriate to do so. The findings support organisational learning and capacity development by identifying priority gaps, risks, and response opportunities, while also helping to enhance and refine existing LGBTQIA+-focused programmes. Importantly, the assessment offers a credible evidence base to support resource mobilisation efforts, enabling grassroots organisations to advocate for funding that reflects lived realities and community-defined priorities.

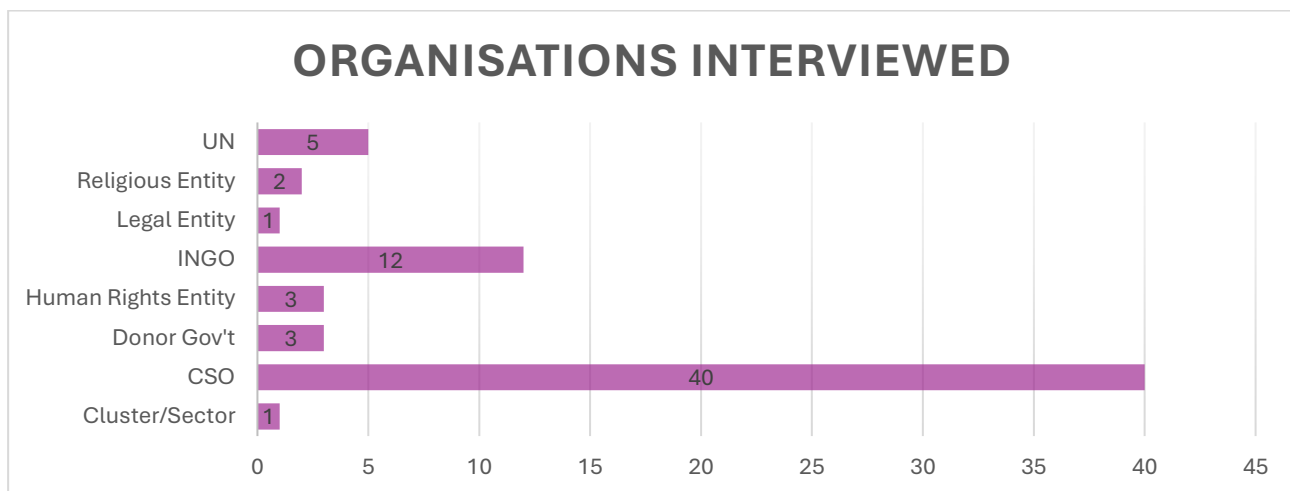
For **international humanitarian organisations**, the assessment serves as a critical tool to advance more inclusive and accountable programming. It highlights the ways in which LGBTQIA+ people are often overlooked within standard humanitarian approaches and provides practical insights to support the integration of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) considerations across all stages of the programme cycle. This includes needs assessment, programme design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, with the aim of improving protection outcomes and reducing harm.

For **donors of humanitarian and development assistance**, the assessment helps identify priority funding gaps affecting LGBTQIA+ people in crisis contexts, including economic empowerment, access to safe housing, mental health and psychosocial support, and legal aid. It supports donors to set clear expectations for downstream partners to demonstrate meaningful LGBTQIA+ inclusion in their programming, while encouraging the allocation of resources to community-led and grassroots organisations best placed to respond.

Section 2. Methodology & Ethical Approach

The data collection utilized a qualitative approach, primarily relying on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) across Malawi, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, and Nigeria between March 2025 and February 2026.

Participants: 455 individuals in total participated in 44 Focus Group Discussions and 67 Key Informant Interviews. KIIs included leaders and staff from 40 local CSO LGBTQIA+ organizations, covering a broad spectrum of areas (e.g. MSM, LBQ, Trans, Intersex, sex workers). 374 community members, including LGBTQIA+ refugees in participated in FGDs. Additionally, 30 representatives from 18 international governmental and humanitarian bodies (UN agencies, INGOs) provided insight into the external context and barriers to inclusion.



Geographic Scope: The research covered Dzaleka refugee camp, and Lilongwe, Malawi; Abuja, Lagos, Maiduguri, and Enugu, Nigeria (including areas near IDP/refugee settlements); Bujumbura and rural areas, Burundi (including border areas near DRC/Rwanda); North Kivu, South Kivu, and Kinshasa, DRC; Nairobi, Kajiado, Limuru, Nakuru, and Mombasa, Kenya.



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4.1 Limitations of the Research

The data gathered faces several methodological and contextual limitations:

- **Invisibility and Self-Selection Bias:** The intersex community is particularly silent and invisible across all regions. Many LGBTQIA+ individuals are in hiding, meaning the data primarily reflects the experiences of those who have chosen to speak out, and are more likely to be living in more less conservative urban hubs (e.g. Lagos, Lilongwe/Blantyre).
- **Lack of LGBTQIA+ Displacement Data:** Many local CSOs, particularly in Nigeria and Burundi, acknowledged they lack specific data or programming for displaced LGBTQIA+ persons, means that conducting scale needs assessments, such as those traditionally conducted by the humanitarian community, very difficult.
- **Capacity Gaps:** Small, grassroots organizations often lack the necessary capacity (e.g. technical expertise, rigorous M&E, resource mobilisation) to rigorously document and analyse all community needs according to international standards.
- **Influence of Funding on the Perception of Needs:** The historic dominance of funding linked to HIV/Key Populations (MSM, trans women) until January 2025¹, may skew the perception of service availability and prioritization, potentially overshadowing other needs for groups such as LBQ women or intersex persons.
- **Security Concerns:** Activists and organizations are often reluctant to share specific security protocols, detailed case files, or safe house locations due to the very real risk of persecution and violence. Whilst these are very legitimate concerns, fully respected by the PRIDE Centre, it does limit detailed insights into some aspects of effective protection mechanisms.
- **Qualitative Data Collection:** The International PRIDE Centre adopted a qualitative approach to data collection, using the same questionnaires across all interviews to enable

¹ Widespread funding cuts to the humanitarian sector, announced 1 January 2025, included significant funding cuts to HIV/AIDS programming worldwide.



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comparability. All information provided by interviewees was voluntary, and on some occasions, interviewees chose not to respond to some questions. Quantitative surveys were not conducted, and therefore quantitative analysis is not possible.

Section 3. Research Findings - Contextual

3.1 LGBTQIA+ Context in sub-Saharan Africa

Field research and legal analyses conducted by the PRIDE Centre, points to **escalating vulnerability** amidst ongoing the LGBTQIA+ community in humanitarian crises, including conflict, food insecurity, climate shocks, and political instability. LGBTQIA+ individuals face **compounded risks**: criminalising legal environments, pervasive stigma, and discrimination amplify exposure to violence, exclusion from essential services, and barriers to safety and protection.

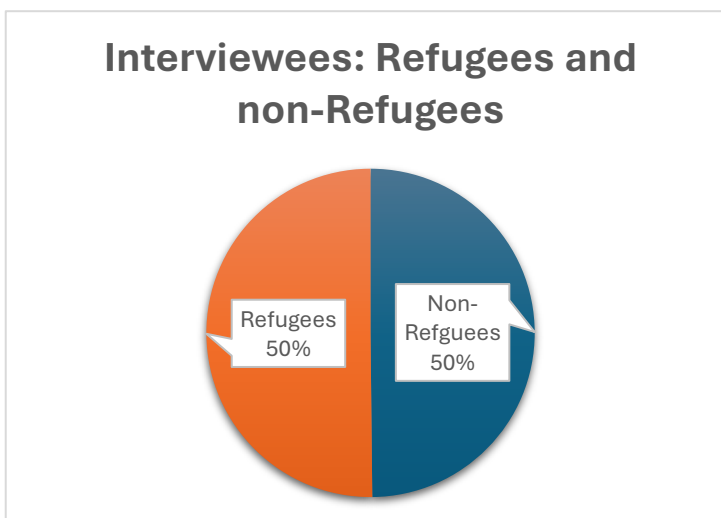
Across sub-Saharan Africa, the **legal environment for LGBTQIA+ persons remains highly restrictive and increasingly hostile**. Several countries are advancing **anti-LGBTQIA+ laws** that criminalise same-sex relations, “promotion” of LGBTQIA+ identities, and related conduct. For example, Ghana is considering a bill that would criminalise identifying as LGBTQIA+ and require reporting of queer individuals to authorities, posing severe legal risk and potential displacement pressures. Burkina Faso’s new criminal code amendments outlaw “promotion” of homosexual conduct and impose penalties including prison and deportation of foreigners. Legal contexts in focus countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda continue to embed criminalisation, stigma, and police harassment within national law and practice, severely limiting civil society space. In many places no anti-discrimination protections exist, and laws are variably enforced to justify arrests, violence, and exclusion from services. Overall, **legal frameworks in the region actively undermine LGBTQIA+ rights and safety**, compounding vulnerability in humanitarian crises.

‘A lot of trans people go to Uganda, because there are refugee camps with other trans Congolese people there. So they prefer to go to Uganda.’ (Key Informant Interview, East DRC, November 2025)

3.2 Perspectives about Resettlement

Quantitative estimates suggest **that over 370,000 LGBTQIA+ persons** are displaced across borders in the region²; and over one million LGBTQIA+ persons are internally displaced. Of the 291 people interviewed who disclosed how they identify, 50% were refugees/asylum seekers, and 50% were not.

In discussions with humanitarian and international actors across the region, the PRIDE Centre has been made aware of the perception that the ‘vast majority of LGBTQIA+ persons want to be resettled’. The findings of our the aforementioned research outline the following:



The interviews with the LGBTQIA+ community show that resettlement is widely understood by LGBTQIA+ refugees and internally displaced people as a life-saving necessity rather than a long-term aspiration. Of those asked, over 70% said they do not wish to return to their place of origin. For many queer refugees in camps such as Kakuma in **Kenya**, and Dzaleka in **Malawi**, as well as those displaced in the Eastern DRC, remaining in host countries in sub-Saharan Africa is perceived as untenable due to entrenched homophobia, lack of legal protection, and extreme risks such as murder and corrective rape. In this context, resettlement to countries is perceived as safer—most commonly Canada or the United States—is seen as the only viable pathway to survival and to living openly and safely.

In **Nigeria**, interviewees report that internal migration (rural-to-urban) and intra-African migration (moving between African countries) are significantly more common than seeking resettlement in the West. One advocacy lead argued that **the narrative of the West as a "utopia" is often inaccurate** and that many queer Africans find sufficient safety and anonymity in cities like Lagos

Interviewees consistently **reject local integration initiatives**, particularly Kenya’s Shirika Plan, which aims to transition refugees from camps into urban settlements. Many LGBTQIA+ refugees view this plan as a “trap” that would expose them to greater harm in a hostile society while permanently closing off opportunities for resettlement. This is backed up by findings which show very high levels of discrimination against refugees and asylum seekers in host countries, both in

² This is based on the conservative estimate that 5% of any population identify as LGBTQIA+, and using that as a measurement of the most up to date OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2026, and UNHCR regional data.

camp and non-camp environments. As a result, there is strong community resistance to integration policies.

At the same time, migration intentions are often incremental. In most cases, each displacement is forced and triggered by a shock (e.g. family rejection, community rejection, threat to life) and the affected person flees to the most quickly accessible, and (perceived) to be safer location – which is often a neighbouring country, or urban centre. In **Eastern DRC**, people aim first to escape rebel-controlled areas by moving to Kinshasa or neighbouring Uganda. In Nigeria, movement is more commonly rural-to-urban, with cities such as Lagos or Abuja offering relative anonymity and safety without necessarily leaving the continent.

Barriers in the Resettlement Process: Several urgent needs shape the feasibility of resettlement.

- **Access to documentation**—especially refugee status recognition and mandate letters—is critical, as many LGBTQIA+ individuals remain stuck in asylum-seeker status for years, excluding them from resettlement consideration.
- Interviewees also highlight the **need for SOGIESC-competent UNHCR staff and translators**, noting that fear during initial registration often forces people to conceal their identities, undermining later protection claims.
- **Financial barriers**, including the hidden costs of passports, medical exams, and travel, further delay or derail cases.
- **Prolonged waiting periods**, repeated cancellations, and opaque decision-making have led to severe psychological distress, including widespread suicidal ideation, underscoring the need for mental health support, clear communication, and accountability. While waiting, many urgently require LGBTQIA+-specific safe houses to protect them from violence in camps and host communities.

While the desire for resettlement is high, the interviewees highlight a stark gap between intentions and outcomes.

Success Rates: Interviewees estimate that only approximately **1% of the community** actually succeeds in being resettled.

Long Wait Times: Some refugees report waiting over **15 years** for their cases to be processed by the UNHCR, leading to severe mental health deterioration and suicidal ideation, which was particularly evident amongst asylum seekers in Kenya.

Blocked Applications: Resettlement is increasingly difficult as some host governments are reportedly **blocking the processing of LGBTQIA+ cases** or implementing "encampment" policies that trap refugees in dangerous environments

There are key factors leading to forced displacement and **emerging patterns of movement**, such as reports of LGBTQIA+ refugees from Kenya and Uganda attempting to reach South Sudan amid rumours of resettlement opportunities in 2025, despite heightened protection risks during transit and at destinations. These movements illustrate how misinformation, limited legal pathways, and desperate search for safety shape displacement trajectories. Other interviewees highlighted that resettlement from Zambia can also be significantly faster. However, this has not been proven by the PRIDE Centre.

Concerns also emerged about fraudulent asylum claims, which fuel suspicion toward genuine applicants. While resettlement is a success for a minority of individuals, there is an impact at a local level. It can destabilize local LGBTQIA+ communities by removing experienced LGBTQIA+ leaders, creating recurring gaps in community capacity, leadership and advocacy

3.3 Intersectional Vulnerabilities

Since January 2025, the security landscape in the region has shifted from systemic social stigma to an acute human rights protection crisis. While historical patterns of exclusion persist in Malawi and Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) currently serves as the region's most volatile case study following M23 rebel incursions into North and South Kivu. The occupation of Goma and Bukavu has dismantled fragile social protections, transitioning the environment from one of institutional neglect to active, targeted persecution. LGBTQIA+ individuals are no longer merely marginalized; they are victims of a coordinated security crisis under rebel authorities who equate their existence with Western political subversion.

The protection landscape for LGBTQIA+ individuals in Nigeria and Burundi has shifted from social stigma to state-sanctioned, institutionalized persecution. National frameworks, such as Nigeria's Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) and the Burundi National Security Council's classification of homosexuality as a threat to national security, provide a perceived "justification" for systemic abuse. This state rhetoric validates the "fanaticism" of the general population, effectively transforming discriminatory sentiment into a mandate for mob violence, arbitrary detention, and extrajudicial extortion.

While homosexuality is not criminalized under DRC law, rebel authorities and homophobic magistrates misuse Article 171(6) of the Penal Code (offending morality) to justify arbitrary arrests. The previous era of "paying for release" has been replaced by arbitrary kidnappings. Victims are increasingly detained in military barracks—rather than civilian prisons—where they face certain death due to the total absence of food, legal oversight, or protection from physical abuse.

Physical Insecurity and Sexual Violence



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Physical violence has surged exponentially in DRC, with reported national rape cases doubling to a minimum of 60 per month, while local observers in Eastern provinces document six to seven cases daily. Rebel authorities conduct systematic "manhunts," specifically targeting trans individuals and lesbians. 'Corrective rape' was reported particularly by those in East DRC, often fueled by religious leaders who use sermons to incite "corrective" sexual violence, claiming homosexuality is a threat to procreation. 'Corrective Rape' is commonly used in Nigeria to "show" victims opposite-sex intimacy or weaponise the police to force children to conform.

Pastors and rebel leaders have weaponized "anti-imperialist" sentiment in East DRC, by claiming LGBTQIA+ individuals are "friends of white people" who fund the rebellion.

In Nigeria, the community face the "Kito" phenomenon, where individuals are lured via online platforms for kidnapping and extortion. In Northern states, the threat of Mob Justice and lynching is pervasive. In Burundi, state-sanctioned rhetoric includes public threats of stoning. The atmosphere of fear encourages the population to report neighbours to local authorities, resulting in community-led harassment and "manhunts" in residential areas.

'Homophobia is rampant among police. LGBTQIA+ people do not feel safe reporting GBV cases to the police, as this frequently results in harassment of victim-blaming. Victims of GBV must obtain a police letter to receive hospital treatment, which exposes them to further harassment.' (Key Informant Interview, Malawi, March 2025)

Impact of Funding Cuts

The cessation of US funding since 2025 has resulted in a catastrophic 70% reduction in annual budgets for protection organizations, severely damaging health infrastructure. In Nigeria, a severe cost-of-living crisis has driven a surge in homelessness, as community members can no longer afford "safe" housing. Local organisations in Burundi have adapted by forming survival-driven cooperatives (focusing on pigs, cows, and tailoring). By integrating these into communal development plans, they provide "added value" to the commune, allowing them to hide in plain sight and secure a degree of state protection through economic contribution.

A renowned hospital in Bukavu, DRC - once a critical referral point for survivors of sexual violence, now lacks the funds to provide comprehensive care. The closure of Goma airport necessitates the dangerous smuggling of medical supplies from Gisenyi, Rwanda. Across the region, interviewees reported a total loss of access to ARVs for HIV-positive patients in displacement settings, and a 10-month depletion of PrEP, condoms, and lubricants. Healthcare workers increasingly refuse treatment to the LGBTQIA+ community, including rape victims, citing moral objections and claiming victims "deserve" the violence.

Transgender individuals face a total absence of gender-affirming care and frequently forge identity documents because mismatching IDs lead to harassment at clinics. This hostility is exemplified

by incidents in teaching hospitals where medical staff have publicly "outed" patients in front of students, causing 90% of surveyed queer individuals to avoid medical facilities entirely.

Inter-sectional Vulnerabilities

The dismantling of IDP camps in Goma by M23 rebels has triggered the forced eviction of over 83 documented LGBTQIA+ individuals³. These displaced persons face multiple discriminations – loss of shelter, exclusion from the employment market, exposure to violence and abuse, denial of critical humanitarian assistance, and deteriorating mental and physical health. LGBTQIA+ persons in East DRC reported being denied food assistance and healthcare by staff in UN agencies and INGOs, based on their gender expression. With US-funded LGBTQIA+ safe houses in Goma and Bukavu now closed due to loss of funds, many survivors are forced to spend nights on the street, and are forced to attempt perilous journeys to other neighbouring countries. This has led to regional LGBTQIA+ displacement.

Findings from PRIDE Centre research, points to a **correlation between time spent in precarious circumstances (e.g. displaced, waiting for refugee status, waiting for access to services) and extreme deterioration of mental health**. Those who have spent four years or more in crises, were more likely to also report extremely poor mental health, and express the urgent need for mental health support.

Community members in Burundi displaced by climate-driven flooding have been explicitly excluded from government and humanitarian aid distributions; and in IDP camps in Nigeria, queer individuals hold "duck" status, trapped in confined spaces with the same harassers who drove them from their original homes.

Section 4. Research Findings – Needs Analyses

4.1 Diversity of LGBTQIA+ Needs

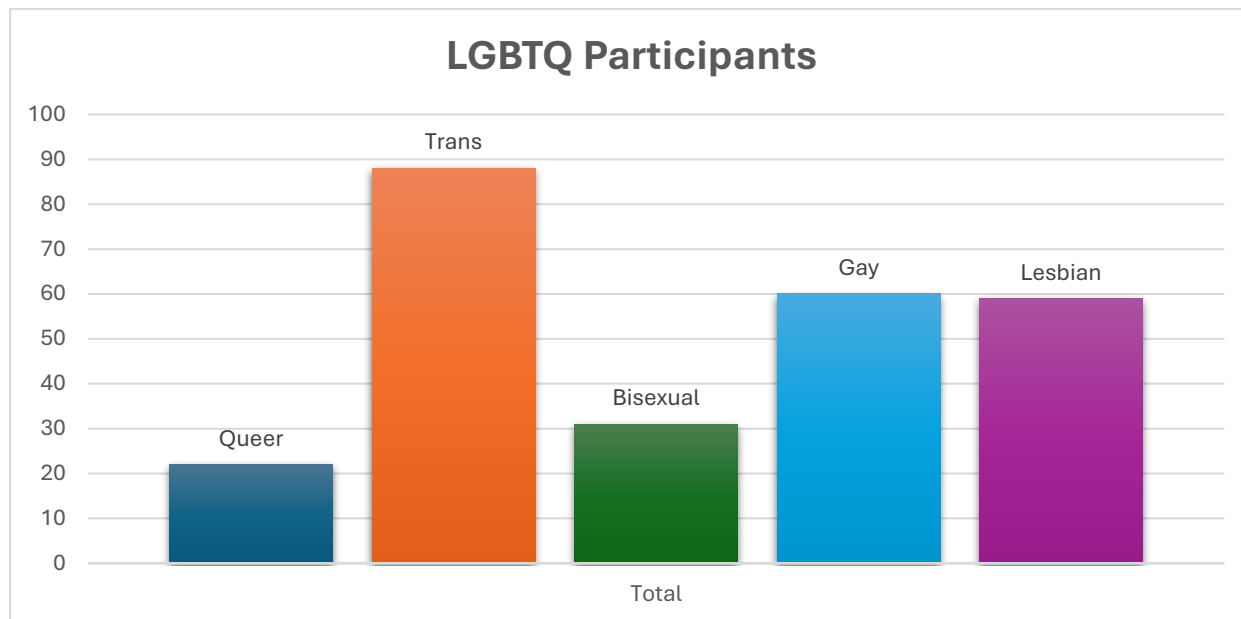
Though the course of research, the PRIDE Centre offered participants the opportunity to voluntarily identify themselves as L, G, B, T, Q, I, A, +. 260 people identified themselves, as follows:

³ Real numbers of those affected are expected to be significantly higher



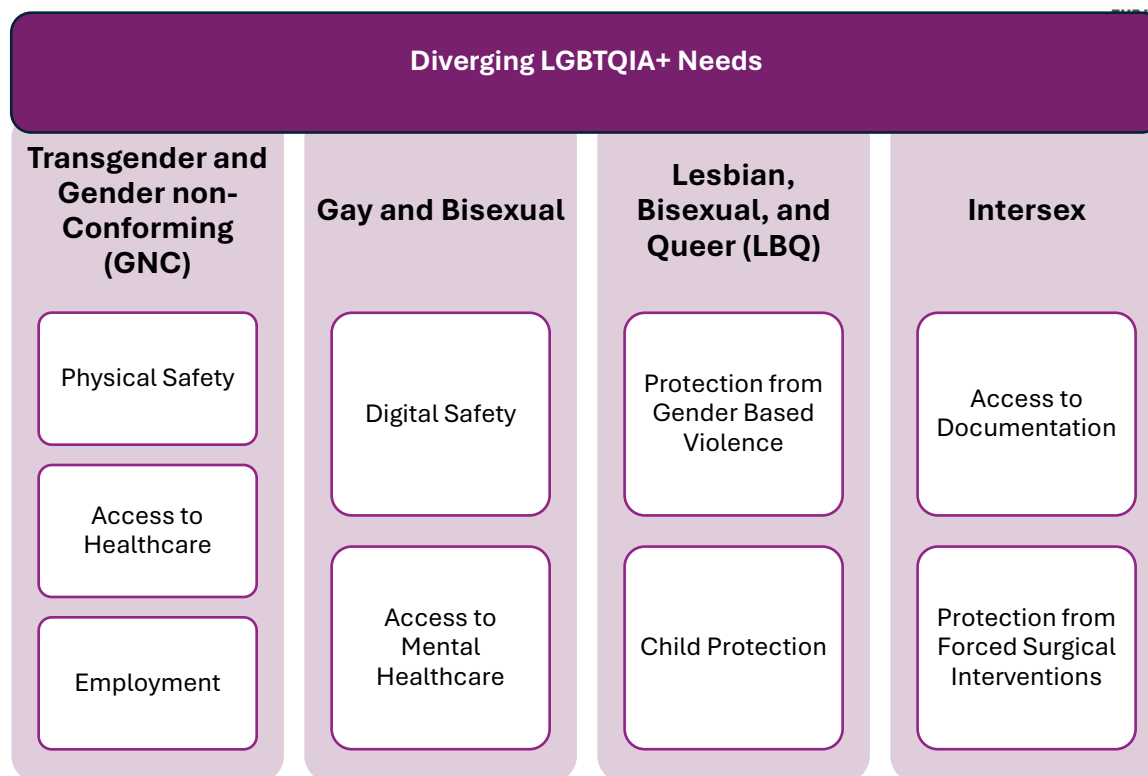
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The number of reported LGBTQ participants is lower than the number of participants, as some of those interviewed chose not to disclose how they identify. In addition, some interviewees (particularly from non-LGBTQIA+ CSOs) do not identify as LGBTQIA+.

While LGBTQIA+ people experience shared patterns of legal criminalisation and social persecution, their risks and needs differ markedly depending on gender identity, visibility, and access to resources. These differences shape who is most exposed to violence, exclusion, and neglect, as well as who benefits from existing funding and protection mechanisms. The table below is not an exhaustive list of needs of all members of the community (which are outlined above). Instead, this chart highlights the most prevalent issues experienced by different groups.



Transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) individuals—especially trans women—emerge as the most visible and vulnerable group. Their visibility exposes them to heightened harassment, violence, and exclusion across nearly all settings. Access to healthcare is a critical crisis: trans people frequently face humiliation and outright denial of services, discouraging them from seeking care. The absence of accessible, medicalised gender-affirming treatment forces many to rely on unsafe black-market medication and hormones. Economically, trans individuals are often excluded from formal employment or dismissed once they begin transitioning, resulting in high rates of homelessness and reliance on survival sex work. Educational pathways are similarly disrupted, with widespread reports of bullying, forced dropout, and expulsion of trans youth. Trans and intersex individuals specifically identify resettlement as a priority because they are often the most visible and persecuted members of the community.

Gay and bisexual individuals, particularly men who have sex with men (MSM), are often more organised and comparatively better resourced due to the prioritisation of HIV/AIDS programming by international donors. However, they face distinct security threats. In Kenya and Nigeria, gay men are frequently targeted by “kito” networks that use dating apps to entrap, kidnap, and extort victims. Many also experience intense familial and religious pressure to enter heterosexual marriages, contributing to severe mental health distress. Those who are less visibly queer may be better able to “pass” in workplaces, offering some protection from economic exclusion not available to trans individuals.

Lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women experience layered marginalisation as both women and sexual minorities. A defining risk is corrective rape, often orchestrated by family members as a

means of enforcing heterosexuality. LBQ women also face unique challenges related to parenthood, including stateless children who cannot be registered without a father’s presence, cutting them off from schools and healthcare. Despite these risks, lesbian organisations report chronic invisibility within both LGBTQIA+ movements—dominated by MSM and HIV agendas—and mainstream feminist spaces marked by homophobia.

Intersex individuals are described as the most invisible erased group. In rural areas, intersex children face infanticide or forced genital surgeries to impose binary sex categories. Hospitals frequently refuse to issue birth certificates, leaving intersex people trapped in lifelong documentation limbo. Government denial of intersex existence in Nigeria, further eliminates any possibility of targeted protection or services.

These vulnerabilities are compounded for refugees and internally displaced people, who face “double marginalisation” within humanitarian systems and heightened exposure to violence in camps, particularly for trans individuals whose identity documents do not match their appearance.

4.2 LGBTQ Refugee and non-Refugees Needs

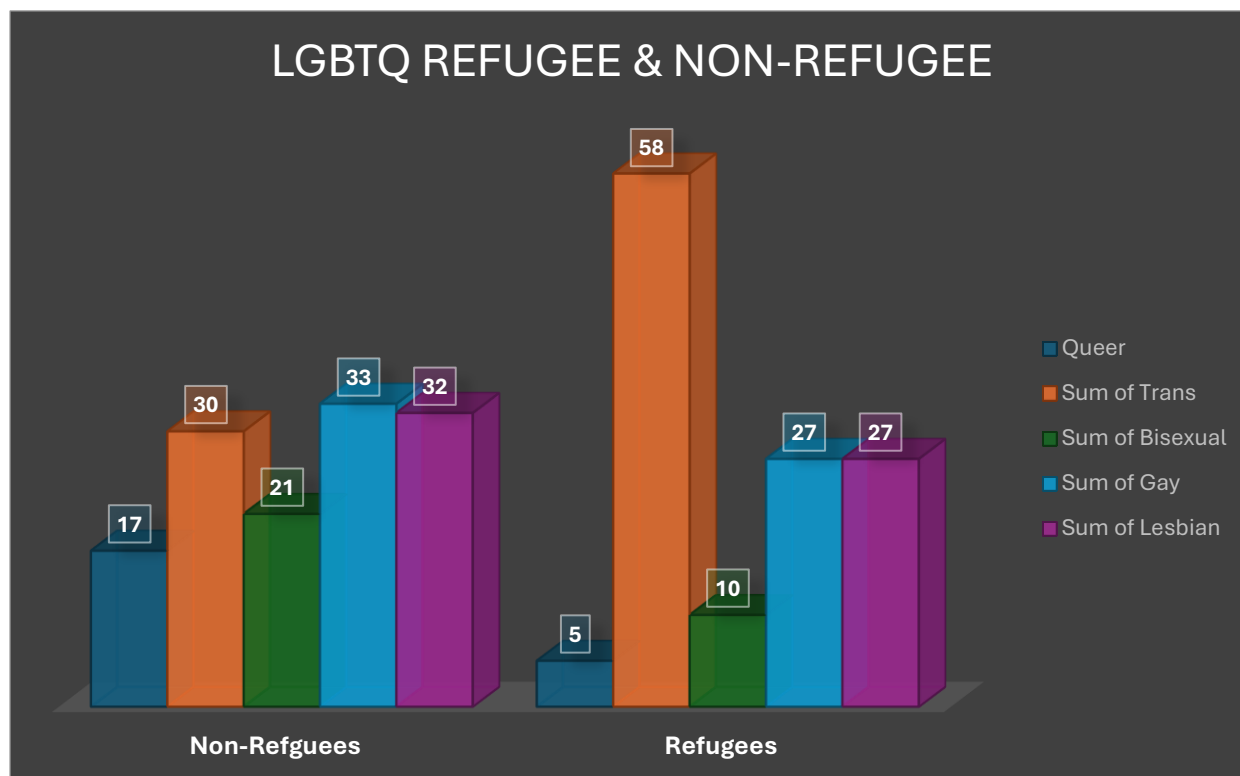
While LGBTQIA+ people in all contexts experience systemic persecution, refugees and asylum seekers face a compounded form of exclusion that produces distinct and heightened protection needs. This “double marginalisation” arises from the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) with displacement status, significantly shaping experiences of legal insecurity, violence, and survival.

The following table shows how interviewees identified, and whether they are refugees/asylum seekers or not. From this table, we can conclude that **transpersons are more likely to be displaced** across borders compared to other members of the LGBTQIA+ community. We can also deduce that Queer persons are the least likely to be displaced across borders.



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Those who identify as Q, I, +, are excluded from the table above as the numbers were too few for meaningful inclusion.

Legal status and documentation emerge as a defining challenge for LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers. Many remain trapped in prolonged asylum processes for years—sometimes more than a decade—without formal recognition, work permits, or tax documentation. This legal limbo restricts access to basic services and forces individuals into informal, high-risk livelihoods. In contrast, LGBTQIA+ non-refugees primarily confront legal risks linked to criminalisation and discriminatory national laws, such as Nigeria’s Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act or the application of Sharia law in parts of Nigeria and Burundi. Their legal protection needs centre on access to legal aid to challenge arbitrary arrests, evictions, and state-sanctioned discrimination within their countries of origin.

Physical security concerns differ in nature but remain severe for both groups. LGBTQIA+ refugees and asylum seekers report high levels of violence in displacement settings, including assaults, stabbings, and arson perpetrated by host communities and fellow refugees in camps such as Kakuma in Kenya and Dzaleka in Malawi. For many, protection is inseparable from the possibility of relocation to urban settings or international resettlement to countries perceived as safer. Non-refugees, meanwhile, often face targeted violence within their own families and communities,



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including forced marriages, “corrective” rape, and organised attacks. Access to discreet, locally safe houses is therefore a critical protection mechanism for both cohorts.

Access to services further illustrates the divide. Refugees and asylum seekers are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance yet are frequently excluded or deprioritised due to stigma or non-inclusive registration systems. Inclusive humanitarian intake processes that recognise diverse SOGIESC are essential to ensure access to food, shelter, and healthcare. Non-refugees, by contrast, require inclusion within mainstream public services, including safe and affirming health facilities that have increasingly been threatened by funding cuts.

Economic survival strategies also diverge. Refugees and asylum seekers, often legally barred from employment, are pushed into survival sex work and require vocational training in mobile, transferable skills. Non-refugees face employment termination when their identities are disclosed and prioritise small-scale enterprises, setting up businesses, and cooperative models that offer both income and social legitimacy. Finally, migration trajectories reflect these realities: while international resettlement is viewed by many refugees as the only viable long-term protection option, non-refugees tend to pursue gradual internal migration toward larger urban centres offering relative anonymity and safety.

LGBTQ Refugees

Legal Status & Documentation

Protection from Camp Violence

Access to safe houses

SOGIESC Recognition and Access to
Humanitarian Aid Delivery

Vocational Training

LGBTQ non- Refugees

Access to Legal Aid

Protection from Targetted Attacks

Access to safe houses

Access and inclusion in Public
Services (e.g. healthcare)

Support to Start Small Businesses



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4.3 Sectoral Needs Analysis

The tables below outline the most critical needs, as directly reported by the LGBTQIA+ community across all research locations. The information is categorized by sector.



Sector	Priority needs as shared by the LGBTQIA+ community in all countries
Healthcare	Access to inclusive, non-discriminatory healthcare is universally needed as community members face pervasive discrimination and/or refusal of treatment. There is a shared need for gender-affirming care to end dangerous "black market" self-medication. All countries identified a critical need to restore provision of HIV treatment, PrEP, and STI services lost to international budget cuts.
Mental Health	The need for trauma-informed therapy to address the high rates of depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideation was repeated in all research locations. Access to queer-competent mental health professionals is essential to avoid re-traumatization during treatment.
Protection	Community members in all regions repeated the requirement pro-bono legal aid to navigate arbitrary arrests, extortion, and "morality" charges. In addition, there were repeated needs for assistance with documentation for refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs to overcome legal limbo and processing barriers.
Livelihoods	Due to systemic workplace discrimination in all locations, there is a common need for vocational skills training and seed capital to provide economic independence, and reduce reliance on sex work – which lead to compounding risks. Interviewees universally identified a need to build sustainable financial models following the collapse of USAID/PEPFAR funding.
Education	LGBTQIA+ persons in all countries report being expelled or harassed out of schools on "suspicion" of their identity, necessitating the creation of safe learning environments for the community. Widespread demand exists for scholarships and technical education for those who dropped out of the formal system early due to discrimination.
Shelter	Every country crisis has an acute shortage of sustainable safe houses for individuals fleeing conflict or family violence. There is a shared need for legal protection against arbitrary evictions and discriminatory rent-hiking by landlords.
Safety and Security	Protection from physical violence, including "manhunts," mob justice, and "corrective rape," is a priority across all regions. Activists in all five countries identified a need for enhanced digital and data security to prevent doxxing, digital harassment, and state surveillance.



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Below is a breakdown of the most common needs identified per sector, within each country.

Country	Healthcare	Mental Health	Protection	Livelihoods	Education	Shelter	Safety & Security
Malawi	<p>Inclusive care: Access to SOGIESC inclusive clinics closed by USAID cuts.</p> <p>Specialised services: Safe access to hormones for trans/intersex people and STI treatment without discrimination.</p>	<p>Trauma support: Addressing high depression and suicidal ideation linked to harassment and violence.</p>	<p>Police reform: Training for police to address homophobia and the refusal to investigate crimes against the LGBTQIA community.</p> <p>Justice: Advocacy for legal reform and addressing political scapegoating⁴.</p>	<p>Job protection: Ending employment termination based on SOGIESC.</p> <p>Vocational alternatives: Training and startup capital to move away from survival sex work.</p>	<p>Safe environments: Curbing harassment and identity-based expulsions that drive high dropout rates.</p> <p>Inclusion: Reintroducing SOGIE discourse in educational settings.</p>	<p>Eviction protection: Addressing discriminatory housing termination by landlords.</p> <p>Sustainability: Re-establishing safe houses shuttered due to funding withdrawals.</p>	<p>Physical safety: Protection from public mob violence and “corrective rape”.</p> <p>Safety networks: Strengthening Zonal Ally Committees and Crisis Response Teams.</p>

⁴ Key Informant Interview, Malawi, March 2025; ‘Politicians, including the current President, use LGBTQI+ issues as a political tool or scapegoat during elections or economic difficulties’

<p>Kenya</p>	<p>Inclusive care: Access to SOGIESC inclusive clinics closed by USAID cuts.</p> <p>Access to insurance: Removing documentation barriers to the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF).</p> <p>Dignity in care: Ending misgendering and abuse in public hospitals.</p>	<p>Psychosocial support: Addressing trauma from severe violence, including in camps; and lengthy resettlement wait times.</p> <p>Specialised therapy: Provision of care by LGBTQIA+ informed/allied therapists.</p>	<p>Legal status: Speeding up years-long UNHCR/DRS interview wait times for refugee status and resettlement.</p> <p>Documentation: Overcoming legal barriers to work permits and IDs.</p>	<p>Right to work: Issuing work permits and KRA pins for refugees to escape survival sex work.</p> <p>Representation: Including LGBTQIA+ refugees in NGO leadership and boards.</p>	<p>Child documentation: Enabling birth certificates for children of queer refugees to allow school enrollment.</p> <p>Safety: Protecting students from identity-based expulsion.</p>	<p>Overcrowding: Addressing overcrowding in shelters with zero privacy.</p> <p>Landlord bias: Combatting rent-hiking and evictions triggered by identity discrimination.</p>	<p>Camp safety: Mitigating severe violence, “manhunts,” and arson in Kakuma.</p> <p>Police misconduct: Addressing extortion and forced nudity during arbitrary arrests.</p>
<p>DRC</p>	<p>Supply chains: Restoring ARV, PrEP, and condom stocks hit by 10-month shortages due to funding and airport closures.</p>	<p>War trauma: Urgent support for those living under armed and violent siege; escaping conflict-related sexual violence.</p>	<p>Justice restoration: Replacing lost human rights monitoring and legal aid mechanisms</p>	<p>Financial resilience: Mitigating 70% budget cuts and navigating bank closures in Goma.</p> <p>Trades: Vocational training for</p>	<p>Remedial learning: Addressing high dropout rates caused by family rejection and school expulsion.</p>	<p>Double-displacement: Specific shelter for individuals driven out of shelters and/or IDP camps by rebels.</p>	<p>Rebel protection: Mitigating systematic kidnappings and torture in military barracks.</p> <p>Physical security:</p>

	<p>Specialised care: Access to hormones for trans people.</p>	<p>Suicide prevention: Addressing ideation linked to social isolation.</p>	<p>(e.g., MONUSCO/ABA).</p> <p>State violence: Addressing extrajudicial execution and “manhunts”.</p>	<p>displaced individuals.</p>	<p>Adult literacy: Education for trans individuals denied early schooling.</p>	<p>Trans housing: Establishing safe spaces for trans individuals without residence.</p>	<p>Protection from public lynching and mob justice in occupied zones.</p>
<p>Burundi</p>	<p>Healthcare cover: Re-establishing essential services lost since 85% funding collapse.</p> <p>Hormone access: Providing safe, medicalized gender-affirming care.</p>	<p>Crisis support: Addressing trauma from the 2023 Gitega mass arrests and state-sanctioned threats.</p> <p>Mediated support: Psychologists to assist in family reconciliations.</p>	<p>State violence: Mitigating rhetoric regarding public stoning and “national security threat” designations.</p> <p>Legal aid: Access to lawyers to navigate “morality” charges in a biased system.</p>	<p>Cooperative capital: Support for VSLAs and businesses (welding, farming) providing social “cover”.</p> <p>Returnee aid: Economic support for refugees returning from Rwanda/Uganda.</p>	<p>Expulsion reform: Ending the removal of students based on “suspicion” of homosexuality.</p> <p>Technical training: Vocational skills for those forced out of formal education system.</p>	<p>Displaced housing: Specific shelter for those displaced by climate-driven flooding.</p> <p>Single-mother housing: Safe spaces for LBQT women rejected by families.</p>	<p>Data privacy: Securing digital and physical data (encrypted laptops/cloud) to avoid exposure.</p> <p>Physical safety: Protection from muggings, extortion, and targeted “manhunts”.</p>

<p>Nigeria</p>	<p>LBQ health: Diversifying funding beyond MSM-HIV to include health services for queer women.</p> <p>Sensitivity training: Ending dehumanizing interrogation in general hospitals.</p>	<p>Counseling: Support for victims of "kito" (catfishing and extortion) and marriage pressure.</p> <p>Safe dialogue: Using secure online groups for mental health support.</p>	<p>Justice: Advocacy against Sharia death penalties and public flogging in the North.</p> <p>Legal education: Training the community to challenge arbitrary arrests through paralegal support.</p>	<p>Job inclusion: Ending discrimination against those who cannot "pass" in the formal market.</p> <p>Startup capital: Providing materials like laptops or sewing machines for queer-led businesses.</p>	<p>Campus safety: Specific anti-violence policies for LBQ women in higher learning.</p> <p>Scholarships: Grants for trans and LBQ people who dropped out due to discrimination.</p>	<p>Trans housing: Safe spaces and safe houses for transwomen.</p> <p>Emergency shelter: Temporary refuge for those fleeing family violence or "kito" incidents.</p>	<p>Anti-Kito measures: Protection from digital catfishing, kidnapping, and extortion rings.</p> <p>Digital security: Defending against doxxing and details being leaked.</p> <p>Raid protection: Mitigating raids on community shelters.</p>
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4.4 LGBTQIA+ Civil Society Organisations Needs

LGBTQIA+ organisations operating across Malawi, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Nigeria are facing an acute operational and existential crisis. Their challenges extend far beyond the delivery of community services and increasingly centre on institutional survival, organisational safety, and the capacity to function in environments that are becoming more hostile and restrictive. Without targeted and sustained support, many of these organisations risk closure, with serious consequences for the communities they serve.

Financial sustainability is the most urgent concern. These organisations were already struggling. However, the withdrawal of major international funding streams, including support linked to USAID and PEPFAR, is leading to existential crises for many of these organisations. Organisations report widespread staff layoffs, the closure of safe houses (so often cited as a critical need by the LGBTQIA+ community), and the suspension of essential health and protection programmes.

Many describe an intensely competitive funding environment in which small, grassroots organisations are forced to compete for limited resources or depend on the very few short-term sub-grants channelled through larger, often non-LGBTQIA+-led organisations. In response, there is a growing need for direct, flexible, and long-term core funding that allows organisations to plan, retain staff, and respond to emerging risks. Equally important is support for economic resilience, including assistance to establish cooperatives or small social enterprises that can reduce complete dependence on external donors.

Capacity gaps further constrain organisational sustainability. Many organisations are excluded from funding opportunities due to an inability to meet complex donor requirements. Priority needs include training in grant writing and reporting, organisational management, financial planning, and monitoring and evaluation. Strengthening advocacy skills, including public speaking and strategic policy engagement, is also critical to enable organisations to effectively engage with diplomats, donors, and government actors.

‘We need capacity building for grassroots organisations on grants writing. Most of the time, small organisations don’t now how to write grants. We cannot afford to hire consultants. Even a virtual training on grant writing would go a long way.’ Key Informant Interview, Nigeria, May 2025.

Physical and digital security has become a pressing concern as LGBTQIA+ organisations increasingly face state-sanctioned persecution, raids, and threats from armed groups or hostile communities. Organisations require resources to strengthen physical infrastructure, including secure premises, surveillance systems, and trained security personnel. Digital protection is equally vital, with needs ranging from cybersecurity training and encrypted data storage to protection against online harassment, doxxing, and smear campaigns. Support to develop formal security protocols and emergency evacuation plans is essential.

The lack of secure, owned physical spaces further exacerbates these risks. Many organisations face ongoing disputes with landlords, including evictions or sudden rent increases once their work becomes known. Ownership of offices and shelters would provide stability and allow for necessary security adaptations. Finally, organisations emphasise the need for legal defence mechanisms and meaningful inclusion in humanitarian and policy spaces. Access to pro bono legal networks is critical to respond to raids and arbitrary arrests, while genuine representation in aid design and access to United Nations mechanisms remains essential to ensure that responses are informed by lived experience rather than tokenistic consultation.

LGBTQIA+ CSO Organisation Needs

Financial Sustainability
Direct, Flexible, and Long-term Core Funding
Support for Social Enterprises
Capacity Development in Advocacy, Organisational & Financial Management
Digital Security
Security Management Support
Security of Tenure
Access to Legal Aid

Section 5. Recommendations

United Nations Agencies

1. **Institutionalise SOGIESC Inclusion Across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle**
UN agencies should systematically integrate SOGIESC considerations into needs assessments, registration processes, programme design, monitoring and evaluation. This includes revising intake and protection tools to allow safe, voluntary disclosure and prevent exclusion from food, shelter, and health services, particularly in camp settings where LGBTQIA+ refugees are at heightened risk of violence.
2. **Strengthen Protection and Documentation Pathways**
Dedicated SOGIESC-trained caseworkers and interpreters should be deployed to reduce misregistration, re-traumatisation, and stalled resettlement files.

3. **Establish Safe Shelters**

Support the establishment and sustainability of LGBTQIA+ specific safe houses inside and outside camps, particularly where violence, arson, and “manhunts” are widely reported.

4. **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**

Scale up access to trauma-informed, queer-competent mental health services, including suicide prevention interventions for individuals enduring prolonged displacement, legal limbo, and repeated resettlement cancellations.

International NGOs

1. **Adapt Sectoral Programming to LGBTQIA+ Realities**

INGOs should move beyond generic “gender and vulnerability” frameworks and implement targeted interventions across health, shelter, livelihoods, education, and protection sectors, reflecting the differentiated needs of trans people, LBQ women, intersex individuals, and refugees versus non-refugees.

2. **Ensure Healthcare Access Without Discrimination**

Partner with trusted local LGBTQIA+ led organisations to deliver inclusive healthcare, and establish referral pathways that do not require police reports or expose survivors to further harm.

3. **Strengthen Digital and Physical Security**

Provide digital security training, encrypted data systems, and risk mitigation support to prevent doxxing, surveillance, and targeting of both individuals and organisations.

National NGOs and LGBTQIA+ led Civil Society Organisations

1. **Invest in Community-Led Protection Models**

Expand peer-led safe housing, crisis response teams, and emergency relocation mechanisms, which have proven effective when formal systems fail.

2. **Build Economic Resilience**

Support vocational training, cooperatives, and small-scale enterprises that provide income, social legitimacy, and protection—particularly for trans individuals, LBQ women, and those excluded from formal labour markets.

3. **Strengthen Organisational Capacity**

Prioritise training (where possible) in grant management, financial planning, advocacy, and M&E to reduce exclusion from funding opportunities and strengthen long-term sustainability.

4. Donors



**THE INTERNATIONAL
PRIDE CENTRE**

PROTECTION, RIGHTS, INCLUSION
IN DISPLACEMENT & EMERGENCIES

1. Provide Direct, Flexible, and Long-Term Funding

Partner with LGBTQIA+ led organisations directly, with flexible, multi-year core support to stabilise services and staffing following major funding cuts.

2. Diversify Funding Beyond HIV-Centric Models

Expand funding to address under-resourced needs, including LBQ women's health, intersex protection, mental health, shelter, legal aid, and economic empowerment.

3. Set Clear Inclusion and Accountability Standards

Require downstream partners to demonstrate meaningful LGBTQIA+ inclusion, data protection, and safeguarding practices, while avoiding reporting requirements that increase risk to communities.

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