

Working with LGBTQ+ Communities in Displacement



LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers face disproportionate levels of violence and discrimination worldwide.

Alongside threats to physical safety, displaced LGBTQ+ people face barriers to employment, education, safe housing, legal status, and health care. Many LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers have endured years of exclusion, discrimination, and violence by families, communities, and authorities before being forced to flee. Once in countries of asylum, they are at heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and often live for years in legal limbo, navigating asylum systems which are not built with their experiences in mind. Living without a recognized legal status increases their risk of targeted violence, trafficking, and exploitation. LGBTQ+ refugees often face exclusion and discrimination from the very systems that are meant to protect them and many humanitarian services do not specifically address LGBTQ+-specific concerns.

HIAS supports LGBTQ+ people to access their rights and rebuild their lives in dignity.

- We offer legal services, including free legal advice and representation for those fleeing persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and help them access other basic rights.
- We support survivors and reduce the risk of GBV through case management, referrals to essential services, safe spaces, outreach, and information-sharing.
- We provide specialized services while working to promote inclusive environments and communities and change the attitudes that perpetuate harassment and discrimination.
- Our community-based mental health and psychosocial support programs promote well-being so LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers can heal and rebuild their lives.
- HIAS' economic inclusion programs help LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers build empowerment and achieve financial independence so they can provide for themselves and their families.
- HIAS provides comprehensive legal, resettlement, and case management services to LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers.
- HIAS works through innovative and high-impact programming and partnerships with LGBTQ+-led Community-Based Organizations, including Refugee-Led Organizations.
- We support community-based spaces for dialogue, needs assessments, and studies that shine a light on the realities and strengths of LGBTQ+ communities.

HIAS looks critically at the humanitarian system and the ways it directly or indirectly disadvantages LGBTQ+ organizations and communities, then works to ensure inclusion and equity in humanitarian service delivery.

We identify concrete ways to work together with our LGBTQ+ partners beyond proposal development and the implementation of programs, aligning strategy and advocacy priorities to ensure that the overall rights landscape for LGBTQ+ people everywhere is centered in humanitarian work.

Call To Action:

1. Provide access to equitable funding opportunities

The humanitarian system can perpetuate power imbalances. Many LGBTQ+-led organizations are excluded from having equitable funding opportunities, because of the language and criteria around accessing humanitarian funding. More proportionate, flexible, and multi-year funding is required to achieve equity.

2. Give LGBTQ+ voices recognition in the humanitarian ecosystem

LGBTQ+ lived experiences need to be included in policy and program design so humanitarian actors should listen to intersectional LGBTQ+ voices. The queer community is not homogenous, and migration and displacement intersect with race; sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC); legal status; class; language; and more. Humanitarian actors need to intentionally create spaces in humanitarian decision-making and coordination structures for LGBTQ+ organizations (including refugee-led organizations).

3. Ensure practical and consistent support of local LGBTQ+ communities and organizations, especially regarding emergency preparedness and response

Humanitarian actors should support LGBTQ+ organizations with the necessary tools and capabilities to respond to emergencies and needs across their communities, including improving technical capabilities in service provision such as GBV response, mental health and psychosocial support services, internet and technological support, financial management structures and fiscal compliance, and data management. Advocating for the registration of organizations and individual documentation and acting as fiscal hosts where necessary can be beneficial as well.

4. Humanitarian actors need to embody the vision of LGBTQ+ rights

Humanitarian actors' interests in LGBTQ+ rights and protection cannot begin and end with the question of displacement. Solidarity with rights movements, advocacy and partnership with decision makers, authorities and governments, strong community grounding, and a global approach to change are all important elements of full support of the LGBTQ+ community. Humanitarian actors have important roles in responding to anti-gender politics globally, and the ways that LGBTQ+ communities experience hostilities. HIAS is committed to ensuring inclusive and accessible protection programs and services for LGBTQ+ communities.

Contact

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4000+

LGBTQ+ people supported through programs in Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya

\$215+

Granted to local LGBTQ+ organizations

45+

LGBTQ+ organizations that HIAS partners with in Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya