

## Notes UNHCR Monthly online Consultations with NGOs

<b>Date</b>	28 July 2021
<b>Session Title</b>	<b>NGOs and the Protection of LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement: Addressing the Blind Spot</b>
<b>Speakers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Machtelt De Vriese</b>, Senior Community-based Protection Advisor, Field Protection Service, Division of International Protection, UNHCR</li> <li>• <b>Melanie Nathan</b>, Executive Director, African Human Rights Coalition</li> <li>• <b>Galo Quizanga</b>, Global Director of Economic Inclusion, HIAS</li> </ul>
<b>Moderator</b>	<b>Loïse Daï Rocheteau</b> , Policy Officer - Forced Migration, ICVA
<b>Participants</b>	50, mostly NGOs and UNHCR staff

### Executive summary

The consultation focused on the importance of understanding and addressing the protection concerns experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) people in forced displacement contexts and briefed participants on the June 2021 Global Roundtable on “Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement”, including its outcomes. Based on concrete recommendations from the Global Roundtable, the discussion particularly reflected on those recommendations addressed to NGOs which include the need to enhance safe and inclusive services for LGBTIQ+; capacity-building; partnership with civil society including LGBTIQ+ support organisations and initiatives; and ethical data collection and management. Based on responsibility and accountability at organisational level, enhanced protection for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people requires a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach through implementation of the recommendations set forward at the Global Roundtable. It is important for UNHCR and NGOs to consider where changes can be made in various programmes to ensure they are safe and inclusive, and how to strategize together to address the protection risks experienced by LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.

### Major points arising from speakers

#### UNHCR

- The protection of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people is an institutional commitment and an operational priority for UNHCR.
- It is crucial to address the blind spots. When LGBTIQ+ people leave their home country, they may end up in more difficult situations in the country of asylum due to homophobia, discrimination, xenophobia and other factors. LGBTIQ+ characteristics also intersect with other factors of discrimination, e.g. age, disabilities, ethnicity.
- Several protection risks are more urgent to address for LGBTIQ+ people, e.g. sexual abuse and violence, lack of police protection, exclusions of basic services, lack of support networks.
- It is important to also recognize that LGBTIQ+ people are forced to hide their gender identity and sexual orientation to avoid further harm in country of transit and/or asylum.
- A global virtual Roundtable on “Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement” was organized in June by UNHCR and the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI).
- The preparation of the Roundtable took almost two years with extensive desk reviews, key informants interviews, regional and global consultations, thematic webinars to inform organizations of the Roundtable.
- The Roundtable convened 500 participants over one month and included 13 working thematic tables. Participants included human rights, humanitarian, civil society organisations including LGBTIQ+ organizations.
- There were five primary objectives of the Roundtables: 1. Tracking progress; 2. Identify challenges; 3. Share good practices; 4. Facilitate networking & coalition building; 5. Identify areas for collective action.
- Participants of the Roundtable identified [39 concrete recommendations which speak to the whole of society](#).
- One of the key messages of the Roundtable is related to the importance of reviewing and adjusting programmes to make them safe and inclusive, including by implementing targeted actions that address the challenges that LGBTIQ+ people face.
- UNHCR cannot work alone. The follow-up on the recommendations must be collaborative and include NGOs who are at the front of responding to displacement.

#### African Human Rights Coalition (AHRC)

- Capacity-building is critical to move forward with the 39 recommendations.
- Many recurrent themes emerged from the working thematic roundtables and what is key is to listen LGBTIQ+ displaced, stateless, community support organisations, peer workers, frontline service delivery actors, consult each other to acquire a deep understanding and lead to appropriate targeted programming.
- Many LGBTIQ+ people seeking protection in neighbouring countries are subjected to demonization and criminalization even in places of asylum and resettlement. It is imperative to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for LGBTIQ+ people in every phase of the displacement cycle where it is safe for them to share their experiences, exchange ideas, and engage with

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decision-makers. It is recommended to always include LGBTIQ+ individuals and organisations when developing initiatives and plans for programming.

- It is also recommended to build evidence to implement aggregated ethical data collection management and reporting throughout case management systems to adequately assess vulnerabilities and priorities while ensuring security and data confidentiality.
- Providing continuous training for service providers is needed, especially to ensure trauma-informed approaches. We need to develop mandatory training with appropriate language training for all involved staff and in all sectors, e.g. hiring staff, those on the frontlines, staff involved in legal aid, medical/health, livelihoods, shelters, refugee status determination, resettlement, advocacy, policy, etc.
- We need to build capacity with research, to follow best practices, and implement guidelines. For example, AHRC developed refugee-led orientation programs for displaced LGBTIQ+ individuals. It includes guidelines, resources, rights information, country-specific information on how to navigate sexualities, gender identity and how to invest in security in a hostile environment.
- For NGOs, effectiveness is depending largely on coalition building which includes strengthening linkages with mainstreamed generalist humanitarian, human rights, and LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations.
- NGOs tend to be confined in our own programming and operations, competing for the same funding, instead of letting funding determine and direct our programs, we should synergise to attain our respective goals, so we can establish a robust and centralized international multi-stakeholder network to regularly share data, research, programs, best practices, and solutions to foster collaboration and partnership with NGOs, UNHCR, UN Independent Expert on SOGIESC, OHCHR, States, for instance, policy regarding settlement criteria, legal gender recognition, admission pathways.

### HIAS

- One of the key messages from the June Roundtable is that LGBTIQ+ people and organisations feel the gap between the needs and the services implemented. LGBTIQ+ people are clear that “nothing for us, without us” is paramount. Regardless of our organisations missions and background, LGBTIQ+ voices need to be consulted and we should adopt the “Do No Harm” approach.
- One of the recommendations of the Roundtable is to conduct outreach to LGBTIQ+ communities’ refugees, where they live and to bolster emergency shelters for them.
- Another recommendation is to create connections, referral pathways, and training opportunities among UNHCR, UN agencies, and NGO partners. Regular cultural and sensitive training must be put in place for all staff and regularly retrain and evaluate impact of the training. It is important to encourage similar training for service providers in hospitals, schools, police and refugee communities.
- Policies need to be developed to protect LGBTIQ+ people. It is important to establish minimum standards including complaints mechanisms and to pay attention to LGBTIQ+ voices in the design of our programs and support grassroots LGBTIQ+ organisations.
- It is also important to encourage funding for LGBTIQ+ programs and keep advocating with donors for direct funding.
- It is key to foster local, regional, global discussions and support networks to promote LGBTIQ+ protection and inclusivity.
- We should bring the Roundtable’s recommendations to our teams particularly at leadership level for awareness-raising and invest time and funding at organizational level.

### Major points arising from discussions

- **Partnership.** LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organizations have considerable experience in providing safe and respectful supports. The participants discussed how to engage in collaboration, partnerships and how to shift internal policies. For example, International Rescue Committee issued two recent reports on [violence against LGBTIQ+ in humanitarian contexts](#) and [ethical research and learning with and for LGBTIQ+](#). The reports include a call for actions for donors, humanitarian actors, researchers and are very close to the recommendations from the June Global Roundtable.
- Based on its experience in protecting displaced population, including LGBTIQ+ people, INTERSOS highlighted that LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people have potentially greater needs at the first phase of the displacement and encouraged all to be careful and sensitive when working with LGBTIQ+ people.
- HIAS shared its strong focus on how to embrace partnerships with refugee- and LGBTIQ+ led organisations and make sure those organisations have a strong focus on human rights. More specifically, HIAS created specific internal guidance in 2018 for HIAS country offices to map LGBTIQ+ organisations that can be contacted for partnerships.
- When LGBTIQ+ people in forced displacement contexts face discrimination, abuse, violence, it is key to engage with organisations that are active in providing support and safe services. NGOs in the field are encouraged to reach out, for instance, to the African Human Rights Coalition, HIAS, International Rescue Committee, organisations such as ORAM, Rainbow Railroad, organisations that have direct inputs or experience in this work.
- Participants were invited to contact NGOs who shared their contacts during the consultations, please reach out to: Africa Human Rights Coalition, Melanie Nathan: [nathan@africanHRC.org](mailto:nathan@africanHRC.org), HIAS, Galo Quizanga: [galo.quizanga@hias.org](mailto:galo.quizanga@hias.org), International Rescue

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Committee, Alexandra Blackwell: [alexandra.blackwell@rescue.org](mailto:alexandra.blackwell@rescue.org); UNHCR Partnership & Coordination Service: [partnership@unhcr.org](mailto:partnership@unhcr.org)

- On partnership with local organisations including refugee-led organisations, one challenge faced to conclude a partnership agreement is the need for the organisation to be registered in the country of asylum. UNHCR is aware about this challenge and is exploring creative means for flexible partnership and supporting the capacity of such organisations.
- **Advocacy.** Several States attended the Roundtable. UNHCR is in contact with states that are supportive of the work done on protection of and solutions for LGBTIQ+ displaced people. Part of UNHCR advocacy is to direct funding to grass-roots organisations that work directly with LGBTIQ+ people, including LGBTIQ+ led organisations.
- **Capacity-building.** From the UNHCR perspective and part of the localization agenda, the work with local organisations is fundamental and UNHCR applies a community-based protection approach to build capacity for locally-led organisations. UNHCR also invests in capacity-building of its own staff and partners to ensure they are aware of and implement policies such as [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity](#).
- **Balance between LGBTIQ+ inclusion/support with safety/stigma concerns in hostile contexts.** Addressing issues from a broad human rights perspective, gender equality and diversity inclusion is one possible approach in hostile context, to avoid exposing NGOs supporting LGBTIQ+ people and allow them to deliver much needed services.
- NGOs, including from Western countries, need to recognise cultural differences, be influential in understanding of intersectionality and diversity without demonizing. When working in a conservative context we should not be forceful.
- **Data collection and management.** There is work to be done to improve the safe collection and analysis of data, a topic tackled by several recommendations from the Roundtable. One priority for UNHCR is about data collection and usage. There must be restricted access to information related to LGBTIQ+ people and be cautious about confidentiality. Before launching a data collection tool we should ensure that staff are trained and aware of data sensitivities.
- **Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) agenda and looking forward**, e.g. December 2021 High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM). For the HLOM and ahead of it, UNHCR is encouraging organisers of side events or stocktaking events to make sure those are AGD sensitive. This approach aims to a HLOM that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people, older persons, persons belonging to minority groups, persons with disabilities and others.

### Follow-up/Action points

#### To UNHCR & NGOs:

- At organizational level, invite all the consultations participants to look at the recommendations from the Roundtable and bring it internally, particularly at the leadership level for awareness-raising and encourage investment of time, human and financial resources.
- Discussions on LGBTIQ+ topic should be organized at global, regional and local levels. UNHCR Regional Bureaus should organize similar events for the dialogue.
- Training for all staff should be established to ensure the right attitudes and skills, including LGBTIQ+ friendly language.

### Background documents/reports/guidance/websites

- Environment Journal, [Why LGBTIQ communities will be disproportionately affected by the climate crisis](#), July 2021
- InterAction, [Centering LGBTIQ+ voices in the NGO sector](#), June 2021
- International Rescue Committee, [Cycles of Displacement: Understanding Exclusion, Discrimination, and Violence Against LGBTIQ People in Humanitarian Contexts](#), June 2021
- International Rescue Committee, [When "We Know Nothing": Recommendations for Ethical Research and Learning with and for LGBTIQ People in Humanitarian Settings](#), June 2021
- UNHCR, [2021 Global Roundtable on Protection and Solutions for LGBTIQ+ People in Forced Displacement - Summary Conclusions](#), June 2021
- UNHCR, [LGBTIQ+ Persons in Forced Displacement and Statelessness: Protection and Solutions – Discussion Paper](#), June 2021
- [UNHCR's Need to know guidance II: Working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement](#), May 2021
- [UNHCR Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#), March 2018
- UNHCR, [Tip sheet on applying the UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity policy to LGBTIQ+ persons](#) and UNHCR [webpage on LGBTIQ+ persons](#)