

# When “We Know Nothing”

Recommendations for Ethical Research and Learning  
with and for LGBTQI People in Humanitarian Settings



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**INTERNATIONAL  
RESCUE  
COMMITTEE**



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# Executive Summary

There is a dearth of rigorous and ethical research to inform the policies and programs of humanitarian actors, and significant gaps remain in evidence on how to safely, ethically, and equitably learn about and support LGBTQI individuals and communities.

To begin to address this gap, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) undertook research with 35 actors, researchers, and activists from LGBTQI-led and LGBTQI-serving organizations in humanitarian contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Through in-depth interviews with key informants, the IRC gathered suggestions on how humanitarian actors can ethically and equitably conduct research on the issues facing LGBTQI people in conflict and humanitarian settings to increase learning and thereby improve programming to better support LGBTQI people across diverse contexts. This report presents recommendations from key informants for how international humanitarian agencies can transform themselves to better learn about and support the needs of LGBTQI people affected by conflict and displacement in three main areas:

## Developing Partnerships:

Partner equitably with local, national, and regional LGBTQI organizations, groups, and networks. Key informants emphasized the need for international actors to foster long-term and non-extractive partnerships to avoid perpetuating unintended harm with local communities. To do so, they recommended conducting power analyses within the contexts they work to understand existing power dynamics as they relate to the financial, convening, and decision-making power that international agencies hold over local actors, policies, and practices. In addition, power analyses should engage local LGBTQI serving organizations to examine local dynamics of power and agency within the LGBTQI community within a specific context. Recommendations from key informants also underscored that international humanitarian organizations such as IRC must recognize and value the expertise that LGBTQI people have on their own realities, and therefore elevate their lived experiences of risk to their safety and wellbeing, as well as the barriers and facilitators to access within each context.

## Conducting Research with LGBTQI People:

- Take a participatory and capacity-sharing approach; invest in becoming a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQI people; consider diversity and intersectionality in sampling; engage LGBTQI partners as decision-makers for measurement and data collection; and ensure the protection of individuals and communities. Key informants emphasized that international actors must invest the time and resources necessary to understand the context before any engagement with LGBTQI communities even begins. This understanding should include context analyses of national- and community-level dynamics, social norms, and attitudes; historical perspectives including the influence of colonialism on current laws and policies; the current political reality; and the linkage of these contextual factors to conflict trajectories. In addition, contextual analyses must engage local LGBTQI actors to consider the range of diversities across sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics, and a deeper analysis of the intersection of structures of oppression and domination based on other identities such as socioeconomic status, age, and displacement status, among others.
- Any research initiatives should be participatory and non-extractive in both knowledge production and use of evidence, and be rooted in feminist principles and capacity-sharing. This approach requires first and foremost creating a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQI people, which starts with engagement with LGBTQI activists, organizations, and networks. This engagement must be ongoing and sustained, as outside researchers and practitioners continue to work with LGBTQI actors in the planning and execution of data collection activities, as well as interpretation of data and dissemination of research findings. LGBTQI partners should also lead the development of measures and tools to ensure they are safe and appropriate and incorporate local conceptions of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

- Research with LGBTQI people must also include partnerships with and resources for local LGBTQI groups that have expertise in risk mitigation and protection, to ensure sufficient procedures around consent, confidentiality, data protection, and referrals to services, as these will differ significantly within each context.

## Organizational Change for LGBTQI People's Rights:

Finally, humanitarian organizations must undertake ongoing learning and capacity-sharing processes to ensure that they have inclusive and supportive policies in place to protect and support LGBTQI people, including staff, partners, clients, and research subjects.

The report ends with specific calls to action for donors, humanitarian organizations, and researchers to better learn about and meet the needs of LGBTQI people living in humanitarian contexts throughout the world. This report is complemented by a report focusing on the forms and manifestations of violence and discrimination against LGBTQI people in humanitarian settings, with a focus on family violence and with essential commentaries from representatives of four LGBTQI-led organizations working in contexts of conflict and displacement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Roth, D., Blackwell, A., Canavera, M., Falb, K. (2021). *Cycles of displacement: Understanding exclusion, discrimination, and violence against LGBTQI people in humanitarian contexts*. New York: International Rescue Committee.

# Introduction

## A Note on Language

The acronym LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex) is used throughout this report as a frame to describe people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). This terminology is Western-centric and may be limiting in the way it attempts to put a spectrum of diversity into categories. However, other terms such as people of diverse SOGIESC, non-normative genders and sexualities, sexual and gender minorities and others also risk othering or depersonalizing groups of people.

Additionally, it is important to note that every individual has all three components that terms LGBTQI and SOGIESC lay out: a sexual orientation, a gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. These elements interact within individuals and often interplay differently within small groups, communities, and broader societies.

Thus, the authors recognize the limitations of using the term LGBTQI for this report and those working with LGBTQI people should seek to listen to and to understand the variations of sexual orientations, gender identities and/or expressions, and sex characteristics across diverse social and cultural landscapes.

The past decade has witnessed increasing recognition that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) people are at heightened risk of violence, discrimination, and exclusion globally, these experiences are further compounded in humanitarian emergencies. For instance, one of the earlier efforts documented the impact of the earthquake in Haiti on LGBTQI populations, and a special issue in *Forced Migration Review* on sexual orientation and gender identity documents a myriad of failures as well as opportunities to support LGBTQI forced migrants.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, in 2015, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) released an influential report on their work in support of LGBTQI persons of concern.<sup>3</sup> The report detailed a variety of risks to safety and well-being facing LGBTQI refugees and asylum-seekers and issued recommendations in four main areas: (1) for identification and outreach to LGBTQI persons of concern, (2) to improve displacement conditions, (3) to provide durable solutions for LGBTQI refugees, and (4) for capacity-building. Since 2015, several other reports have been released that detail challenges to survival and well-being among LGBTQI persons affected by conflict and displacement.<sup>4</sup> Notably, in 2018, the Humanitarian Advisory Group released a report that highlighted the fact that LGBTQI persons aren't being included in humanitarian response plans and unique needs are not being met.<sup>5</sup> The report highlights how humanitarians can better work along the program cycle to be more inclusive of LGBTQI populations in humanitarian response.

Yet, despite these insights, the humanitarian response remains inadequate in their approach to learning about, becoming accessible for, and supporting LGBTQI people in humanitarian settings. The reasons for these gaps are complex and may include a variety of factors that vary across humanitarian contexts. For example, humanitarian agencies may struggle to find a balance between the need to provide humanitarian assistance in a rapid

<sup>2</sup> See Couldrey, M. & Herson, M. (eds.). (2013).

<sup>3</sup> See United Nations High Commission for Refugees. (2015).

<sup>4</sup> See both Women's Refugee Commission. (2016)., and also Dwyer, E. & Woolf, L. (2018).

<sup>5</sup> See Humanitarian Advisory Group. (2018).

and emergency response framework while also setting up appropriate procedures and safeguards to consult at-risk populations to assure their assistance responds to the needs and rights of priority populations. Secondly, the humanitarian system itself is blind to diverse SOGIESC<sup>6</sup> meaning that the existing frameworks, tools, and guidance, including common tools used for consultation with at-risk populations are formulated with a heteronormative, cisgender, binary, and endosex assumptions. For example, a Human Rights Watch commentary flags the use of the term “affected populations” as a catch-all term which effectively hides the needs and rights of particular at-risk groups.<sup>7</sup> And finally, the humanitarian assistance infrastructure in a given context may be built within a context of conflict, failed legal protections, and ongoing flux that may make humanitarian agencies feel like they have to make a decision between potential risk of harm for high-risk populations and non-consultation. Combined, these factors have served to erase the experience of LGBTQI populations, a reality that cannot remain acceptable.

Within this framing, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) sought to understand how it can better learn about and serve LGBTQI clients in relatively concrete and practical terms, and it sought to learn about this from LGBTQI-serving activists, organizations, and researchers themselves. This report collates that feedback and attempts to further shine a light on concrete ways in which international humanitarian organizations, including the IRC, can and should do better in the way they serve LGBTQI people affected by crisis and conflict.

This overarching aim of this report is to uncover how humanitarian actors can ethically and equitably conduct research on the issues facing LGBTQI people in humanitarian settings in order to develop tailored and contextually appropriate programming approaches.

## Our Study

Between January and July 2020, the IRC conducted 35 key informant interviews using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The requirement to participate in the study was having experience supporting LGBTQI persons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and/or Asia and the Pacific. The sample included representatives from LGBTQI-led and -serving organizations (primarily in the Global South), as well as researchers and activists. The IRC held interviews over Skype, Zoom, or WhatsApp and each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Interviews were conducted in English, French, or Spanish. Interviews were not recorded for safety reasons, although detailed notes were taken by the interviewers. Notes were cleaned and uploaded to Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software, without names or identifying information. All interviews were coded using a deductive coding system based on the interview guide format, which was adjusted as needed based on participant responses. Coding was cross-checked by multiple reviewers. The study was considered exempt from review by the IRC’s institutional review board (IRB).

The interviews were used to inform both this report and *Cycles of Displacement: Understanding Violence, Discrimination, and Exclusion of LGBTQI People in Humanitarian Settings*.<sup>8</sup> Drafts of this report were shared with participants for any feedback and ‘response commentaries’ were drafted by Global South LGBTQI activists and organizational representatives.

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<sup>6</sup> See Dwyer, E. (2019).

<sup>7</sup> See Knight, K. (2016).

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<sup>8</sup> See Roth, D., Blackwell, A., Canavera, M., & Falb, K. (2021).



# How International Humanitarian Agencies Can Transform Themselves to Better Learn about and Support the Needs of LGBTQI People Affected by Conflict and Displacement

The results of our interviews fell into three categories of recommendations to consider: (1) developing equitable partnerships with LGBTQI organizations, networks, and activists; (2) conducting research with LGBTQI people; and (3) supporting organizational change to support LGBTQI people's rights. Combined, these recommendations will help humanitarian organizations better partner with, learn from, and elevate the needs and lived experiences through inclusive humanitarian programming. We acknowledge within these recommendations that IRC is still on a pathway towards achieving these goals.

## Developing Partnerships

### Equitably Partner with Local, National, and Regional LGBTQI Organizations, Groups, and Networks

Respondents unanimously spoke of the need for INGOs to meaningfully partner with LGBTQI organizations to ensure that all research efforts, as well as any programming, are implemented safely, responsive to the community, and delivered at high quality. These partnerships should be long-term in duration and non-extractive in nature, as international humanitarian agencies may perpetuate unintended harm when acting alone and without principled partnerships with LGBTQI organizations.

In order to break post- and neocolonial norms and achieve equitable partnerships, power analyses must be undertaken. Humanitarian agencies hold significant amounts of power, whether it be financial power, convening power, influence over local policies and practices (donors), or power to drive decisions about how resources are used and for whom. Humanitarian agencies who want to invest in supporting LGBTQI people in humanitarian settings so that LGBTQI people can be free from violence and empowered to claim their rights, need to reflect on both the source of and how they are using their power.

“In crisis, when working with local organizations, this is where I think a decolonial practice is really important: Acknowledging power and privilege and different hierarchies implicit in large NGOs in the human rights sector and community-based organizations working with small budgets. Working with a community based organization, you can partner to think through an eventual intervention. Talking openly with organizations about this and offering how could you be helpful, sharing knowledge and evidence-based practices. On the research side, if partnering with local organizations, find ways for the research to really inform their practice so that it is meaningful and have community-based dissemination practices. What will remain in the afterlife of the organization after IRC leaves?”

Key Informant



“If you show up to [Country], you will identify 4 large organizations and you talk to those folks. But you have to actually identify the power dynamics between those organizations which are all college educated [and] speak English. They know how to get the grants. We have a lot of smaller organizations doing this work with FaceBook and WhatsApp, and they are not part of this conversation. Make sure to include different tiers [of organizations in [countries], bigger-tier to contact medium ones, and then smaller ones.”

Key Informant

Within their power analysis, humanitarian agencies should consider local dynamics of power and agency within LGBTQI groups. Key informants commonly explained that within the LGBTQI community there may be certain groups or organizations whose voices are more consistently uplifted and partnership sought, or profiles that are seen as being unfairly advantaged (LGBTQ asylum seekers outside their country of origin, for example), or perspectives that certain LGBTQI groups are taking away resources and economic opportunity from others. Within LGBTQI communities, there may also be gate keepers. Humanitarian agencies should consider these internal power dynamics in the communities and reflect on who might be excluded, what levels of power different groups have, and consider how their actions could exacerbate and perpetuate unequal dynamics of power within the LGBTQI community. For example, one respondent said:

“In [Country], a [name of ethnic group] person might tell me that an [ethnic group] is more homophobic, but [you] need to be cognizant of where that comes from, and how it fits into the political context. Who is funding who—this can create different biases as well.”

Key Informant

Key informants further emphasized that LGBTQI people are experts on their own realities. They hold a hyper-localized understanding of LGBTQI people's needs; they have lived experiences of risk to their safety and well-being, in-depth understanding of manifestations of abuse, nuanced views of the openness of their communities, and clear understanding of barriers to access to LGBTQI community

members across cities, regions, from urban and rural areas, and within contexts of varying religious and political dynamics. Humanitarian organizations must recognize and value the immense knowledge transfer to INGOs from LGBTQI activists, networks, and organizations when conducting this work.

“Number one and most obvious answer is to identify and reach out to organizations that are already doing the work. They will be aware of different things to take into account: outreach, legislation, contacting minors, or doing outreach with minors. [That is the] best way to do that, and most of the problems happen when global organizations ignore the work that grassroots organizations have been doing. There is a bit of white savior complex; people in big organizations think they are doing ground-breaking work. Number 1, do the research, figure out who is already doing the work, to see what works best. Social media may work or not [and may be] criminalized in certain contexts or others. Reach out to those who are on the ground and who know and are part of the communities.”

Key Informant

## Conducting Research with LGBTQI People

### 1. Setting the Stage: Understand the Context

“If you want to carry out research in [City], you need to understand the political, social, economic aspects of the specific region you are going to. While you can get information online, get in touch with an institution that does political analysis in the area, even just a person. Before conducting research with whatever group you have. Before going directly into research, you can have a conversation and it can give you insight into what you can do better or change for your research.”

Key Informant

## WHAT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS TOLD US

“The background research needs to be done preliminarily before organizations start serving an area. There are differences within the environment. You cannot homogenize a country or a society. For example, [country] has a majority Catholic population—this does not mean that everyone that is experiencing violence or LGBTI in the same way.”

Key Informant

“Firstly, a huge amount of literature has to be reviewed. People have to be spoken to about the history and politics. I was also speaking to people to understand the political landscape with regard to gender. For example, what happened to create a gender policy that was never implemented? Had an interview on the landscape with regards to religion... The gender binary stands from American rule and Catholic religion stems from Spanish rule. Where does the marginalization even originate from and how is that reflected in policy about how people can live their lives? Lots of reading required and interviews. I spoke to ministers in government and religious leaders to discuss their perspectives on the landscape of [country] as a whole. I also found it interesting to discuss these things with my participants. It is something they have to think about all the time.

Key Informant

Context analyses are foundational to high-quality research and should include analyses across the ecological model, considering national level dynamics as well as community-specific diversities and realities that shape LGBTQI lives. It should include a historical perspective as well as a present day one, seeking to understand how history shapes the present. For example, one participant raised how colonialism shaped the present-day penal code. The contextual analysis should consider these laws and policies that are in support of or hurt LGBTQI people, including uncovering the institutions that have historically supported or hurt LGBTQI persons through the application of discriminatory policies or institutional cultures that condone discrimination and violence.

Additionally, humanitarian organizations should seek to uncover political movements that have shaped or endangered LGBTQI people's rights and how those political movements shape daily realities. For example, recent movements based on ethno-nationalisms, which place emphasis on national narratives that are based on heterosexual hyper masculinities and pronatalism, thereby associate LGBTQI rights with polluting Western influences. Contextual analyses should consider how LGBTQI people's realities may be shaped by ongoing political developments, and their linkage to conflict trajectories, and how those developments may further inform or restrict LGBTQI people's well-being, for example, discussions on universal health coverage in Kenya, or the targeting of LGBTQI by specific armed actors.

Furthermore, the religious institutions that shape opinions in society must be considered, as they may have explicit anti-LGBT rhetoric that seeks to shape broader social mores on gender, sexuality, diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, and sex characteristics. In humanitarian contexts in particular, religious organizations have been known to blame LGBTQI communities for disasters or ongoing conflict, the 2010 Haiti earthquake being one example of this.

At the community level, it is important to understand attitudes and norms related to SOGIESC diversity. As one key informant said, “To understand a community, you need to include a community.” Consider a broad scope to your contextual analyses, speak with different segments of society: religious

leaders, human rights defenders, journalists, local authorities, community leaders, and activists. Consider understanding of context as part of an evolving process, including asking participants in your learning activities how they feel politics, religion, and history have shaped how they experience the world. The contextual analyses should also consider in what ways the use of new technologies, such as social media, may create safe, supportive spaces or alternatively hurt and/or amplify risk for LGBTQI communities.

Contextual analyses should strive to understand how the experience of the context may vary for different groups, the members of which may have different realities as people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, or with atypical sex characteristics and are therefore not homogenous. No universal experience should be concluded.

A contextual analysis can be conducted in a variety of ways, but usually begins with a review of existing data and resources. When meeting individuals or groups to expand contextual analyses, humanitarian agencies may consider using case studies of events in their country or others to unpack current beliefs and realities.

## 2. Study Design: Take a Participatory and Capacity-sharing Approach

Given historic marginalization and the ongoing fight for LGBTQI people to access their full rights, humanitarian organizations should ensure their approach to research and learning is rooted in feminist principles, non-extractive, and takes a participatory and capacity-sharing approach to knowledge production and use of evidence. Part of this process would include an examination of power dynamics in the research process itself:

“ We should be thinking about research as inherently extractive. Need to face reality and build research practices that are de-colonial, feminist, and build on care methods. With any community we run the risk of doing harm, [and specifically] doing harm in a public-client sense. We should be asking, who are we benefitting? How does the community benefit? At the stage of designing a study,

you can build budgets and have a notion of what research justice looks like while building the project. In terms of physical safety and more institutional ideas, [you have to remember that] mental health is important; Trauma informed research design [is important], we should keep at the center the mental health implications of our research; In terms of care ethics protocol, there [should be] at least a basic mapping of services that communities can have access to afterwards. Activities that are not [just] research-oriented, after doing research that is more orthodox. We need ways to support communities as they talk about issues, ways to connect participants to some sort of justice seeking. For example, can IRC help them to be placed in contact with human rights lawyers? Is there a sub-division in IRC that supports with different contacts in seeking justice? Research could feel like its connecting individual participants to some form of justice seeking.

Key Informant

Recognizing that INGOs have limited expertise in these spaces, capacity-sharing is a critical component of rigorous and equitable research and learning processes, whereas humanitarian INGOs will be the largest beneficiary of a knowledge exchange with partners given limited overall experience in this space. Although the design of research and learning processes will vary based upon the context, strategies to ensure a participatory and capacity-sharing approach could include co-conceptualizing the research and learning questions, co-designing the overarching study, including sampling and data collection tools, establishment of referral pathways and other ethical considerations, and shared meaning-making of analyses and results.

“ Don't go and do research “on” but rather do work that is participatory research. The communities should be partners in creating the instruments for the research and defining what they themselves need from that research. Your own research interests and instruments may and should change according to the research needs and methodologies with the population working not “on” but “with.”

Key Informant

### 3. “Recruitment”: Become a Safe and Welcoming Place for LGBTQI People to Approach

Humanitarian organizations seeking to learn about the needs of LGBTQI people must first and foremost be a safe and welcoming place for LGBTQI people to approach. This should be achieved through engagement with local LGBTQI actors, and this engagement should not be one off and may require significant time and effort. As one key informant noted, “In the context of the Global South, you really have to rely on the organizations, leaders, and gatekeepers within communities. Our populations don’t show up the way they do in Global North. [We] have to rely on the networks to have people connect to you. The truth is that it has to be responsive to the existing realities in that context.”

In the absence of this engagement, humanitarian actors, and especially INGOS, will not have the credibility to reach LGBTQI people and risk designing services that are, *at best*, not useful, and *at worst*, unsafe. In partnering with LGBTQI-serving organizations, all components of a study should be facilitated and further clarified through this engagement, as key informants emphasized.

“First thing first, whatever work you want to do should go through local organizations; that is how you would know where to go. There is already trust that has been built between local organizations and the people. Having come from something like that, it would encourage people to come to you. Partnerships is something that we need to think about in the response we need to give. [It] need[s] to be very open and even in your presence it is clear from the beginning that this is a place that isn’t going to discriminate. [There needs to be] people that understand the specific needs that people have. For example, in a health scenario, they would have really specific health needs.

Key Informant

“Identifying local activists who are already visible is key. Visibility could be complex in the Global South, as it could mean death or death threats. In most contexts, there are visible activists who do work on the ground. It is important to partner with these key social actors doing rights and solidarity organizing. Part of the preliminary mapping out and scoping work, should be mapping out who are the activists.

Key Informant

“A problem that arises a lot with humanitarian actors who don’t have any or who have only nominal relationships with queer communities, they tend to go out there in a very tokenistic way to include queer people in data collection or needs assessments, but they do that without a clear understanding of the risks involved. And they have not articulated a clear Do No Harm policy. They try to do the work through the vantage point of a broader humanitarian perspectives, and that can create additional protection risks.

Key Informant

Partnerships with LGBTQI activists, organizations, and networks, particularly in data collection activities also meaningfully improved feelings of belonging and safety for potential participants. As one key informant said “*An LGBTI person is at ease to answer questions to an interviewer who shares their orientation or identity.*”

“Currently we are working on a WASH project and our procedure for identifying people is through myself – through the transgender community. They are easy and very supportive and open to sharing their points and identities with me because I am like-minded and I am like them, so they have no hesitation to share their experiences and personal data with me. The methodology is very common so you should onboard transgender staff from the context who are similar so they can get any kind of information or survey or assessment through these staff.

Key Informant



// In [Country], we work with the community as our staff. You have to work with them from the community and all staff are from this population. We have over 600 people on and 75% are from the community, so they have the same attitudes as the population.

Key Informant

// INGOs have typically ignored these issues and local organizations have been providing services since the beginning. They have the trust and confidentiality that are super important for this population. These people are extremely marginalized and living on the edge of society, barely able to meet their needs.

Key Informant

When considering recruitment approaches to research, key informants at LGBTQI organizations emphasized using a snowball approach. Additional options such as respondent driven sampling may also be employed. Additionally, international humanitarian organizations should always ask themselves the question, “Who is not included?” or “Who did we miss?” so that participation in data collection is as transparent as possible. Key informants also highlighted additional ways they reach potential clients through Grindr or Facebook, but again, in **no** circumstance should an INGO seek to reach out and ‘find’ participants without clear, principled partnerships in place with LGBTQI organizations, networks, and people.

## 4. Sampling: Consider Diversity and Intersectionality

As stated above, considering the range of diversities across sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics is essential to undertaking this work. This nuanced understanding of these diversities, their fluidity, and how they interact, should be layered with deeper analysis of intersecting structures of oppression and domination, such as those based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, refugee status, citizenship, geography, age, and so on. All research and learning efforts should incorporate deep attention to these diversities and their intersectionality within their

sampling approach as it has potential to create rich, subtle, and profoundly meaningful research.

// We know nothing, we know so little about these communities. The number one thing is to disaggregate. We all do this, but we lump everyone together into LGBT. These are all different groups, diverse SOGIESC is terrible to say—so dehumanizing. People might not identify as one way or the other, these are very western constructions. We need to disaggregate but also recognize that people don’t neatly fall into these groups, so how do we engage effectively? What languages do we use to describe this? How do we conceptualize? Start at [that] very basic point.

Key Informant

// Understanding of local terminology for LGBT groups [is important]. In Arabic, there are different terms. In one organization, we tried to mention LGBTI persons as a vulnerable group, but we had a translator using a pejorative term. Understanding the terminology is really important. Make sure we do back translation. So much confusion and differing definitions about trans and on non-binary identities—we need to understand those. We also need to understand colonialism. In Afghanistan, there is Bachar Bazi, the young boys who perform feminine dances. There is lots of abuse of these young boys, and we need to understand cultural history and not looking [only] at the harm.

Key Informant

Humanitarian agencies also need to clarify whom they are intending to serve, as this will dictate sampling approaches. For example, if agencies intend to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services for all sexual and gender minorities, they will not do this effectively by only speaking to gay men or to trans women, who may be the most vocal and visible across many contexts. Humanitarian agencies need to seek out multiple partnerships with diverse organizations and groups in order to effectively learn about their needs or target their learning in a contextually relevant way.

“ One thing to be aware of is that not all LGBTIQ organizations work with all members of the community, so you may have networks within particular parts of the community and need to be careful about who your local partner choice is. So, for example, there are organizations who are funded more through HIV mechanisms and happen to be more bisexual or trans men or women. Reproductive rights organizations tend to have more queer women. Feminist politics may vary from other organizations. Cis gendered queer women might be more invisible but pop up more in feminist organizations and arts collectives and local businesses. There are different ways that people exist within communities and activities and being aware of that is very important. For intersex people, they are often not organizing as much. There is an organization in Asia, an organization in Australia and other high-income countries, but more are slowly emerging. So, the way to engage may not be through overt LGBTIQ organizations. Again, hopefully you have established this relationship beforehand. Also, there are lots of informal networks who may be a source for snowball sampling and community engagement, but this needs to be done and set up very carefully precisely because of protection concerns. You don’t want to be guilty of exposing those networks.

Key Informant

Additionally, it is paramount that humanitarian agencies recognize that being LGBTQI is only one aspect of that person’s experience. Other identities may have powerful effects on how they experience the world as LGBTQI people. For example, as key informants explained, LGBTQI people from higher socio-economic statuses might not face the same type of discrimination and abuse as those from lower-resource backgrounds. LGBTQI who are displaced may face additional discrimination as refugees because they may be seen as competing with the local population for access to resources and livelihoods.

“ This is like a backpack, a backpack from other people; it becomes heavier. It’s not the same if I’m a trans person who is trans in an urban versus rural environment. It’s not the same if I am to be indigenous and trans. It’s not the same to be a blue-eyed blond-haired lesbian and a Brown or Black lesbian. It’s not the same to be trans and a transvestite. It’s not. And depending which boxes you tick off, your backpack could become heavier. Things start adding up for gender identity, same as sexual orientation.

Key Informant

Humanitarian agencies must also consider how visibility and invisibility of community members is informed by other aspects of their identity, recognizing that in many cases they may be interacting with some of the more privileged members of the community who can afford to be out and visible, and this more privileged status may bias what studies uncover.

## 5. Measurement & Data Collection: Systematic, Thoughtful, and Led by LGBTQI Partners

### Quantitative:

Existing evidence on LGBTQI needs in humanitarian settings is extremely limited, and with this demographic quantitative data are often not collected consistently and systematically. While humanitarian organizations should strive to measure and disaggregate results by different SOGIESC identities in order to uncover disparities, there are no circumstances in which it is safe or appropriate to collect this data in all needs assessments without proper engagement of or review by LGBTQI activists, organizations, or networks as indicated in other recommendations.

To the extent possible that it maintains sufficient levels of anonymity and confidentiality that it will not put respondents at risk, data should be disaggregated and analyzed intersectionally.

“With particular respect to queer communities, it’s quite widely recognized that there is quite scant guidance to gathering information from queer communities. I think, issues that I’ve seen coming up, [are] like enumerators or data collectors going out with pre-conceived notions about what they are going to find. Which box do you fix—L, G, B, T, or I? The baseline of understanding is very elementary at this point, so that really carries the risk of perpetuating these biases and stereotypes—analyses of the information doesn’t feed into a transformative process that would help humanitarian actors and the wider communities’ understanding of queer communities and how to engage with them.

Key Informant

### Qualitative:

When conducting qualitative research, humanitarian agencies need to approach tool development thoughtfully and mitigate potential challenges, particularly for focus group approaches. For example, key informants noted that humanitarian agencies should not assume that convening a small number of focus groups with a mixed group of the LGBTQI community will surface the realities of all community members. In fact, those who are most vocal within a given context will likely dominate the conversation and some community members may be less open in a mixed group. It’s important to keep in mind that people exist upon several spectrums, and it will be impossible for any one study to have a full picture of SOGIESC. For example, while INGOs should not try to ‘find’ LGBTQI people, one key informant noted, “In general, most visible and most vocal in the community are gay men and then trans women...” Care must be taken to ensure such group based exercises are facilitated in such a way that allows all participants to have space to voice their experiences.

### Translation and Adaptation:

In both qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts, humanitarian INGOs should consider the language that is used in the data collection process. While all research should ensure that it is undertaken in respondents’ preferred languages and using local

conceptualizations, it is particularly important for LGBTQI research. For example, as one key informant explained, asking a young person “Are you trans?” in a survey may not resonate in all contexts. Trans may not be a category they have heard of before nor one they identify with.

## 6. Ethical Considerations: Do No Harm, Protect Confidentiality and Safety, and Secure Referral and Response Processes

Local LGBTQI groups that humanitarian agencies are partnering with are experts in risk mitigation and contextualized strategies to assure safety. Members of these LGBTQI groups should be placed in decision-making leadership positions to ensure that the ethical risks outlined below are mitigated.

### A. Mitigating Risk and Potential for Harm

As humanitarian agencies embark on their learning journey with LGBTQI partners, a risk mitigation plan should be developed specific to their learning process. The risk mitigation plan should consider every aspect of the learning journey, and humanitarian agencies must consistently ask themselves if the risks outweigh the benefits. If at any point it is clear that they do, the learning process should be reconsidered. As one key informant noted, it is important to consider what is essential information or not:

“When it comes to confidentiality, we need to pay attention to choose the site carefully and determine what data/information we want to have and how we are going to use it. That will help us to protect the data and make sure we aren’t collecting too much data that we can’t use in the future. This way it’s easier to control safety and confidentiality. Sometimes we ask too many questions and don’t have a clear purpose and this sensitive information increases risk.

Within the risk mitigation plan, humanitarian agencies should consider four main areas: staffing, local stakeholder engagement, data collection tools and modalities, and learning dissemination.

## KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK IN RISK MITIGATION PLANNING

Staffing and Training	Local Stakeholder Engagement	Data Collection Tools and Modalities	Learning Dissemination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can we safely involve local LGBTQI organizations, networks, and people in data collection? If your organization has not safely consulted with local LGBTQI organizations, then the research may hold risk for creating harm to LGBTQI people.</li> <li>Who is collecting the data? Do they have biases that should be considered? Will they enact microaggressions towards the research participants or potentially break confidentiality? Does the nature of their identity attract visibility? For example, white researchers in the Global South.</li> <li>Are data collectors trained in research ethics and do no harm?</li> <li>Who is interacting in any way with the research participants (e.g. drivers, interpreters, etc.)? Does this interaction pose any kind of risk? Consider also bias and microaggressions.</li> <li>How many people are meeting with our research participants at once? Will this participation raise red flags and make community members interested and thereby increase visibility of the LGBTQI participants?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do I need sign-off from local leaders/ government to complete my learning process? What are the risks if I ask for sign-off? What are risks if I don't?</li> <li>How can I gain sign-off without endangering my participants? For example, consider including LGBTQI persons as part of a larger study.</li> <li>What intentionally vague language should I use to describe my learning process? For example, consider using contextually relevant, but vague language around inclusion.</li> <li>Is their potential for backlash against my LGBTQI partner(s) or my organization because of this learning process? How can that be mitigated?</li> <li>Are there local allies in leadership positions to help mitigate risk?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are our data collection tools fit for purpose? Are all the questions they ask absolutely necessary for delivering services?</li> <li>Do my methods themselves put people at risk? For example, having focus groups where people may share personal experiences even if not asked.</li> <li>Do my tools or data collection process pose any risk to outing the research participants?</li> <li>What are our contingency plans if research spaces and modalities need to change quickly?</li> <li>Does my informed consent have intentionally vague language, and have we considered oral consent to reduce risk?</li> <li>Is the language and terminology I'm using in my tools reflective of the context? For example, could it stigmatize or harm people I'm speaking with or cause them to doubt themselves?</li> <li>Could the design of the research modality lead to explicit LGBTQI-targeting for violence?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are my results sufficiently anonymized so that it is impossible to identify individuals? Consider establishing minimum thresholds through which data will not be further segmented to prevent identification of individuals.</li> <li>Will there be backlash against the LGBTQI community locally because of my study?</li> <li>Is the way I'm describing the demographics of my research population appropriate and in alignment with their own conceptualizations?</li> </ul>



## B. Identifying Safe Spaces and Times

Local LGBTQI actors will guide humanitarian agencies as to what a safe space looks like in their context, considering both physical and virtual safe spaces as the context allows.

“The safe space for research should be identified by the social leaders. Could be an activist home space, community center, virtual space. Could be giving tablets or other materials for research. Space where there can be human interaction is important to make sure the research interactions are empathetic and as horizontal as possible.

Key Informant

“Everyone has a known definition of safe space, and what it is to them. You can pull up at a park, and someone might label you as LGBTI, so it's not a good space for you, or might not be a comfortable space, but it is for them. Safe space is where that individual wants to be at a particular time, and having that conversation is very important.

Key Informant

Before identifying physical safe spaces, humanitarian agencies should consider the necessity to meet people in person. Are there safe options to connect with people virtually? Consider what that might look like, including identity protections and safe spaces for conversation without the potential of someone else accessing the line, virtual trolls, and so on. Some examples may include organizing phone calls, collecting information through an app or website, or on a survey platform. When making decisions with local LGBTQI partners about whether virtual or physical spaces are safer, the pros and cons should be weighed. If facilitating connection and discussion through a virtual platform, humanitarian agencies should reflect with their LGBTQI partners on how the virtual space may offset the importance of building rapport in-person as well as whether using virtual spaces could exclude important voices from the learning process due to connectivity issues or digital literacy.

If physical safe spaces are a viable option for the context, humanitarian agencies should demonstrate flexibility around what is determined a safe space, recognizing that it may vary from traditional conceptions of “safe spaces.” Humanitarian agencies should also recognize that a physical space may be safe at some times of the day rather than others, and what may be safe for one person might not be safe for someone else, including data collectors.

Examples of safe spaces described by our research participants included hotel rooms, backs of vehicles, an activist's home, a university, venues for eating and drinking, LGBTQI community spaces, and others, considering LGBTQI “living, loving, and community spaces.” As one research participant noted, “Safe spaces are not those that are with us, but with them.” It is important to keep in mind that what is a safe space for one community or one individual, may not be considered a safe space for others. For example, while offices of LGBTQI organizations might be safe spaces for persons who are out, they may be dangerous spaces for persons who are not out, and thus a neutral space is preferred. Additionally, what is considered a safe space at one point in time might change quickly, so humanitarian agencies need to be nimble in supporting those changes.

## C. Seeking Informed Consent

“Communities want to have a very full, very clear picture of what is going to be undertaken. If it's research, they should understand the scope, the area, the modalities of collecting data, what kind of evidence we hope to attain from this research, and how it is applicable in transforming the lives of LGBTQ people.

Key Informant

“Informed consent has referral places, and we really try to give them the option of here is the information, but also if you don't want this form, don't take this form. It is not safe for them to take the informed consent form sometimes; you need to be flexible about research and sensitive issues.

Key Informant

#### **D. Assuring Confidentiality, Anonymity, and Data Protection**

Any learning process where participants are asked to give their opinions and share experiences must include an informed consent process. Study participants highlighted that humanitarian agencies need to manage expectations about what the research will do for the research participants, whether people may expect benefits from the INGOs / LGBTQI organizations, benefit from the results of the research, or receive other benefits. Of note, INGOs may want to explore the opportunity cost and appropriate levels of non-coercive compensation for participation. All consent forms should be written in intentionally vague language when describing study goals so as to minimize potential risk should a non-study participant gain access to a consent form. The consent language itself, however, should be very clear. Overall, the use of non-signed written consent forms or oral consent forms should be considered as best practice.

“ I think one first thing in terms of the principles, we really have to furiously align with the information management principles, particularly for protection research. We have protection information management principles, for example that you have to carefully train on the process of data management, analyzing and sharing it. Safety and security for data protection and confidentiality and consent—this kind of knowledge is really important for training for anyone who does data management and is involved in any part of the research process.

Key Informant

Respondents also reiterated that standard confidentiality measures should be put in place, including having research IDs, not recording names (in either consents or databases), working in safe spaces, detailed and clear training to data collectors on confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection. Technical protections should also be considered, for example, against hacking of data storage spaces. Humanitarian agencies may consider, for example, conducting a risk assessment on their data storage mechanisms and testing if there are ways to break data protection procedures and access participant data. As a first step, international humanitarian organizations should seek to learn from data

protection procedures already in place from local and national LGBTQI organizations and should always create an accountability mechanism whereby research participants and community members can write or call if they have any questions or complaints about the research or researchers.

#### **E. Referrals to Services**

All learning activities should be linked with access to safe and welcoming service provision at a minimum, assuring clear referral pathways for individuals who report traumatic experiences. One research participant explained, “For participation in data collection—first point, is that there must actually be services available and working through partners that are providing services is key.” If the humanitarian agency cannot assure safe, supportive services directly, a service mapping should be completed prior to any data collection activity. The service mapping should include analysis of what organizations are LGBTQI affirming, as opposed to just general service providers. This step is crucial for assuring that the learning process does not create additional spaces for trauma in and of itself. Referral pathways should be clear, and access to those services should be provided free of charge.

#### **F. A Note on Ethical Review**

Research is defined as a systematic investigation and should receive ethical approval by appropriate review boards before such work is undertaken. Care should be taken to determine which boards may be most appropriate, and whether supplemental reviews, such as by LGBTQI community advisory groups, are also needed. Other learning activities, such as informal needs assessments, context analysis and mapping, and routine monitoring, should uphold these ethical values but may not need formal ethical review. All practitioners and researchers should determine the most appropriate course of ethical review, in line with local or national regulations.

## Organizational Change for LGBTQI People's Rights

### Ensure Humanitarian Organizations Have Inclusive and Supportive Policies in Place to Support LGBTQI People.

As humanitarian INGOs begin to undertake research, learning, and programming for and with LGBTQI people affected by conflict and crises, INGOs themselves need to ensure they are committed to, resourcing, and undertaking work to promote the rights and wellbeing of LGBTQI people within the organization. Humanitarian agencies should ensure that human resource policies and norms within the organization are inclusive and supportive of LGBTQI staff and allies, including the establishment of anti-discrimination, non-retaliation, and zero tolerance policies related to SOGIESC-related discrimination. In places where it is appropriate and legal, INGOs should also include these identities in demographic data collection efforts to ensure there are no equity disparities in pay, retention, or opportunities for advancement for LGBTQI people.

As part of diversity, equality, and inclusion efforts, trainings should also be established to ensure that attitudes of staff and norms within INGOs are also supportive and welcoming. Where there are limited internal capabilities for these trainings, humanitarian agencies should engage LGBTQI organizations to deliver values clarification and bias trainings. Some examples of the approaches key informants mentioned to tackle attitudes and microaggressions included completing sensitization workshops, starting with the basics of identifications, terminologies, and pronouns. These trainings should be delivered consistently and with visible support from leadership. However, key informants diverged in some cases on the value of trainings, questioning whether they change attitudes in the first place, but still cautioned against jumping into doing client-facing work before internal transformation processes are undertaken.

“Transforming attitudes is quite possibly the most difficult thing you can do because people have the information but might simply decline to provide services without prejudice. I don't think that people don't know; I think it's that individuals are just declining to provide services. People are biased. There have to be some kinds of consequences [if they don't]; I acknowledge that some organizations are young, religious, but we are standing by non-discrimination and equality for all; I can't do another training; I've had it up to here. The same people, year after year after year. Still, the same questions: “How do lesbians have sex?” How is that relevant to you taking the fingerprints of a new registrant? How does that have to do with how you provide health care? I don't know how realistic it is.

Key Informant

“But it's also about personnel and staffing and attitudes within organizations. Organizations should be transformative internally before or while thinking about programming things. Organizations think as programming add-on or strategy and haven't done the transformational work required to look at drivers and exclusion and the way their organizations might be contributing. When we work with organizations, we often emphasize biases such as gender normative and hetero normative standards; this shines light back on organization themselves, and how we might be making people invisible. That transitional journey is crucial; otherwise we are being extractive.

Key Informant

“This population has a lot of skepticism and fear when it comes to INGOs, and INGOs have got to really have the staff with the right attitudes. Otherwise, this work will come out as harmful, and it will not be a safe place to come forward for services. Despite agencies' stated policy on these issues, you really need to look at and vet attitudes. Have do-no-harm approach and ensure non-discrimination are important values.

Key Informant

In addition to promoting inclusive and supportive work environments, humanitarian organizations—particularly large international NGOs that may have access to more funding than local or national civil society LGBTQI organizations—should also be mindful of efforts to employ LGBTQI staff that may result in a “skimming” of staff from these community organizations. This could lead an extractive process that may weaken these local organizations or potentially be harmful when specifically seeking to recruit LGBTQI people depending on the context. Instead, INGOs should partner with LGBTQI organizations and ensure that they are sufficiently funded to equitably compensate for staff time and that they are funded in core, unrestricted funding. This is particularly important for shorter-term projects such as research studies where LGBTQI staff from these organizations can contribute to and lead research activities, but additionally, such an equitable partnership funding model could strengthen these organizations and minimize risk of staffing instabilities for smaller organizations after a study is completed.



# Call to Action

## Researchers

- Safely and ethically pursue a robust research agenda on the experiences of LGBTQI people in humanitarian settings. Avoid the imposition of the Western-centric LGBTQI and SOGIESC frameworks, seeking instead to understand locally-relevant definitions of sexuality, gender, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, and what different groups experience across contexts.
- Partner with LGBTQI people and organizations to undertake and research and learning processes. Involve LGBTQI people and organizations at all steps of the research process, not simply research design and analysis. Seek and promote leadership from LGBTQI researchers, especially from the contexts where the research and learning will happen.
  - Equitably compensate LGBTQI-led organizations as partners in research efforts for both direct and indirect costs.
  - When disaggregating data for all relevant categories related to SOGIESC, ensure that data protection and confidentiality remain priority.
- Publish findings only after a risk assessment of publication has been conducted, ensuring that local experts and LGBTQI people and organizations have had a chance to review and amend publications as needed.

## Donors

- Ensure that grants made to improve the lives of LGBTQI people affected by humanitarian crises have involved LGBTQI people in the program design, development, and implementation:
  - Earmark a certain percentage of grant funds—at minimum 20%—for actions led by local and (where appropriate) national and regional LGBTQI people, including LGBTQI-inclusive feminist organizations, and include mechanisms for ensuring that grants to *international* organizations include percentages for local and (where appropriate) national and regional LGBTQI people.

- Consider funding participatory grant-making mechanisms, drawing upon expertise developed by some regional initiatives and potentially working in partnership with them (such as the Other Foundation for Southern Africa, UHAI-EASHRI for East Africa, and ISDAO for West Africa), for LGBTQI people affected by humanitarian crises. Move towards a model of LGBTQI leadership for LGBTQI programming, not merely partnership with “international” humanitarian organizations. Ensure sufficient time for partnership development between organizations once calls are released.
- Consult with a range of global LGBTQI individuals and organizations affected by humanitarian crises on potential funding policy changes before enacting them.
- In grant communications, ensure that individuals’ and organizations’ safety are not put at risk due to their receiving of donor funding; i.e., do not publish any names, organizations, data, or reports without explicit permissions.
- Fund research and learning activities alongside programming to identify and document what works.
- While recognizing the need to be in touch with LGBTQI people if one is designing programs to serve them, do not seek to “find” or to “identify” LGBTQI people but rather, establish internal mechanisms and processes for ensuring that services are welcoming and accessible for LGBTQI people. Some of these may include:
  - Partnerships with LGBTQI-led organizations, where possible, ensuring that the voices of multiple LGBTQI individuals and organizations also have their space, especially the voices of women, trans and non-binary people, and intersex people;
  - Self-assessments or audits, designed in partnership with LGBTQI individuals and, where appropriate, organizations, to determine the extent to which services, recruitment processes, and other elements of the organization are safe, accessible, and welcoming for LGBTQI people; financed action plans for remediation where deficiencies are discovered;
  - An intentional focus on creating inclusive organizational culture and policy:
    - Ensure that all staff are adequately trained on issues of SOGIESC;
    - Ensure there are no salary, retention or career development disparities for LGBTQI staff;
    - Provide accountability when staff members act in ways that do not uphold principles of impartiality and act in ways that are discriminatory and derogatory;
    - Ensure safe space for LGBTQI people to exist within the organization, to convene and communicate confidentially as desired, and to have redress avenues and protection available for potential retaliation against them if perception of their diverse SOGIESC creates harm.
- For program designers across sectors, ensure that nuanced conceptualizations of family—which understand that families may be harmful for LGBTQI people—centralize the safety and confidentiality of LGBTQI people.

## Humanitarian Organizations

- Establish partnerships early.
- Establish systems for equitable partnerships, including transparent financial information, when international organizations partner with local, national, and regional organizations. Avoid languages and processes of *capacity-building* from international organizations to local, national, and regional organizations and use instead processes that focus on *capacity-sharing* of respective competencies.

# Conclusion

Humanitarian agencies have the mandate to serve persons affected by crises around the globe; and aspire to principled humanitarian action driven by four core tenets: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Within this frame, and across the arc from crises to recovery, humanitarian agencies reach individuals whose lives and well-being are under threat. Yet despite this mandate, few humanitarian organizations have consistently sought to understand how they can make their services open, accessible, and welcoming to LGBTQI communities affected by conflict and crises. The reasons for this significant and wide-ranging gap are complex, but none of them excuse the oversight. Humanitarian agencies can and should do better. In order to better serve LGBTQI communities in an inclusive, safe and empowering way, humanitarian organizations must understand better both the existing assets within LGBTQI communities as well as gaps in their needs and violations of their rights. Rigorous and ethical data collection and supportive and empowering programming, alongside LGBTQI members is the needed foundational step to hold INGOs and others to account.

# Glossary

The below definitions are provided to help elucidate language in the report. IRC does not seek to define these terms itself, and has cited the source of all terms included.

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI):** LGBTQI+ is the most frequently used acronym to refer to diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics.

**Cisgender:** Refers to people whose gender identity aligns with the gender assigned to them at birth. Cisgender can be shortened to “cis.”  
[[genderspectrum.org](http://genderspectrum.org), adapted by Dynarski]

**Cisnormativity:** The assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender. Although transgender-identified people comprise a fairly small percentage of the human population, many trans people and allies consider it to be offensive to presume that everyone is cisgender unless otherwise specified.  
[[queerdictionary.blogspot.com](http://queerdictionary.blogspot.com)]

**Family Violence:** For the purposes of this report, family violence is defined as violence occurring within the family system that is perpetrated by one family members towards another family member.

**Gender: The socially and culturally constructed and reinforced ideas of what it means to be a certain gender (third gender, male, or female) in a specific context.** Gender is often assumed to be along binary lines (i.e. man/woman), but is in fact a galaxy. Gender is rooted in social norms rather than in biology. Gender is constructed and reinforced through norms and expectations whereby an individual is expected to act in a certain way based on their perceived gender, regardless of whether those actions align with an individual’s interests, wants, or needs. Gender is a relational concept that cannot be understood in a vacuum; it is best understood when examining interactions and relationships between individuals and between or within social groups and institutions. [Edge Effect, 42 Degree Library]



**Gender Galaxy:** The idea that gender is not a binary, nor a spectrum, but a space of infinite and fluid possibilities for gender identity and expression. There are many interpretations and imaginations of the gender galaxy, but all are based on the idea that gender identity and expression may not be fixed, nor are they 'somewhere' between two poles (as conceptualized on the gender spectrum). [Bockting, Benner, & Coleman, 2009, adapted by IntraSpectrum Chicago]

**Gender Identity:** A person's internal sense of being a girl, woman, man, or boy, someone in between, or beyond these two identities. [Irvine and Canfield, adapted by Dynarski]

**Gender Expression:** Refers to an individual's presentation—including physical appearance, clothing choice, and accessories—and behavior that communicates aspects of gender or gender role. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity. [American Psychological Association and National Association of School Psychologists]

**Gender Expansive:** An umbrella term used for individuals who broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender-expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society's notions of gender. [genderspectrum.org]

**Gender Non-conforming:** People who express their genders in ways that are not consistent with the societal expectations of the gender assigned at birth [Irvine and Canfield, adapted by Dynarski]

**Heteronormative/ity:** Heteronormativity is the belief or assumption that all people are heterosexual, or that heterosexuality is the default or "normal" state of human being. A heteronormative society operates on the assumption that heterosexuality and specific gender features are the human "default." [queerdictionary.blogspot.com]

**Intersectionality:** Intersectionality is a framework that acknowledges and critically considers how different characteristics—such as gender, sexual orientation, physical/mental ability, age, rurality, geographic location, nationality and/or religion—interact to shape an individual person or group's experience of the world. In this way, intersectionality does not consider one characteristic to be a person's primary "source" or marginalization, but seeks to understand how multiple characteristics can compound and shape marginalization or, equally, *create opportunities for empowerment and resilience*. An intersectional analysis of refugee food distribution would, for instance, consider how a person's gender identity and expression; sexual orientation; age; marital status; whether or not a person cares for children; whether the person is in a romantic partnership or is single; religion; ethnicity and physical and mental dis/abilities might change their ability to access food. [Edge Effect, 42 degree library]

**Non-binary:** People whose gender is not male or female [National Center for Transgender Equality]

**Poly-victimization:** The repeated (more than once) experience of violence.

**Queer:** An umbrella term for people or communities who are/identify as non-cisgendered or non-heterosexual. Queer was previously, and by some continues to be, considered a deeply derogatory slur towards gay men. It is, however, being reclaimed within the diverse SOGIESC community, especially amongst younger people. The term 'queer' conveys a sense of politicality, community, and connectedness that other terms do not convey; it covers sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics in a way that other terms do not. Individual people may refer to themselves as queer or as being members of the queer community while others may not; some agender and asexual people may identify as queer. [Edge Effect, 42 Degree Library]

**Sex Characteristics:** Sex characteristics are the genetic, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics used to classify physical sex at birth. Determination of sex is usually based on pre-determined anatomy of external genitalia, but also informed by internal reproductive organs and hormones. The medical community's understanding of the diversity of human sex characteristics is expanding. [Edge Effect, 42 degree library]

**Intersex:** An umbrella term that refers to people who have one or more of a range of variations in sex characteristics that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. [interAct]

**Endosex:** Endosex is a way to describe sex characteristics that categorize as typical anatomical females or males. An endosex or dyadic person is not born intersex. Endosex people can have any gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression. The term "endosex" is sometimes preferred over "dyadic," because it does not reinforce a binary system. [adapted from anunnakiray.com/biological-sex/]

**Sexual Orientation:** A person's capacity for profound emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with individuals or people of a different gender, the same gender, or more than one gender. Sexual orientation can change overtime. [Edge Effect, 42 degree library]

**Bisexual:** A person who can be attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity. "Bi" is often used as an abbreviation. Related terms include pansexual, queer, fluid, omnisexual, nonmonosexual, in the middle sexualities, heteroflexible, homoflexible, polysexual, and many others. [Human Rights Campaign Foundation *et al.*]

**Gay:** A person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to individuals of the same gender, typically in reference to boys and men, but also girls and women. [Irvine and Canfield, adapted by Dynarski]

**Lesbian:** A girl or a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other girls and women. [Irvine and Canfield]

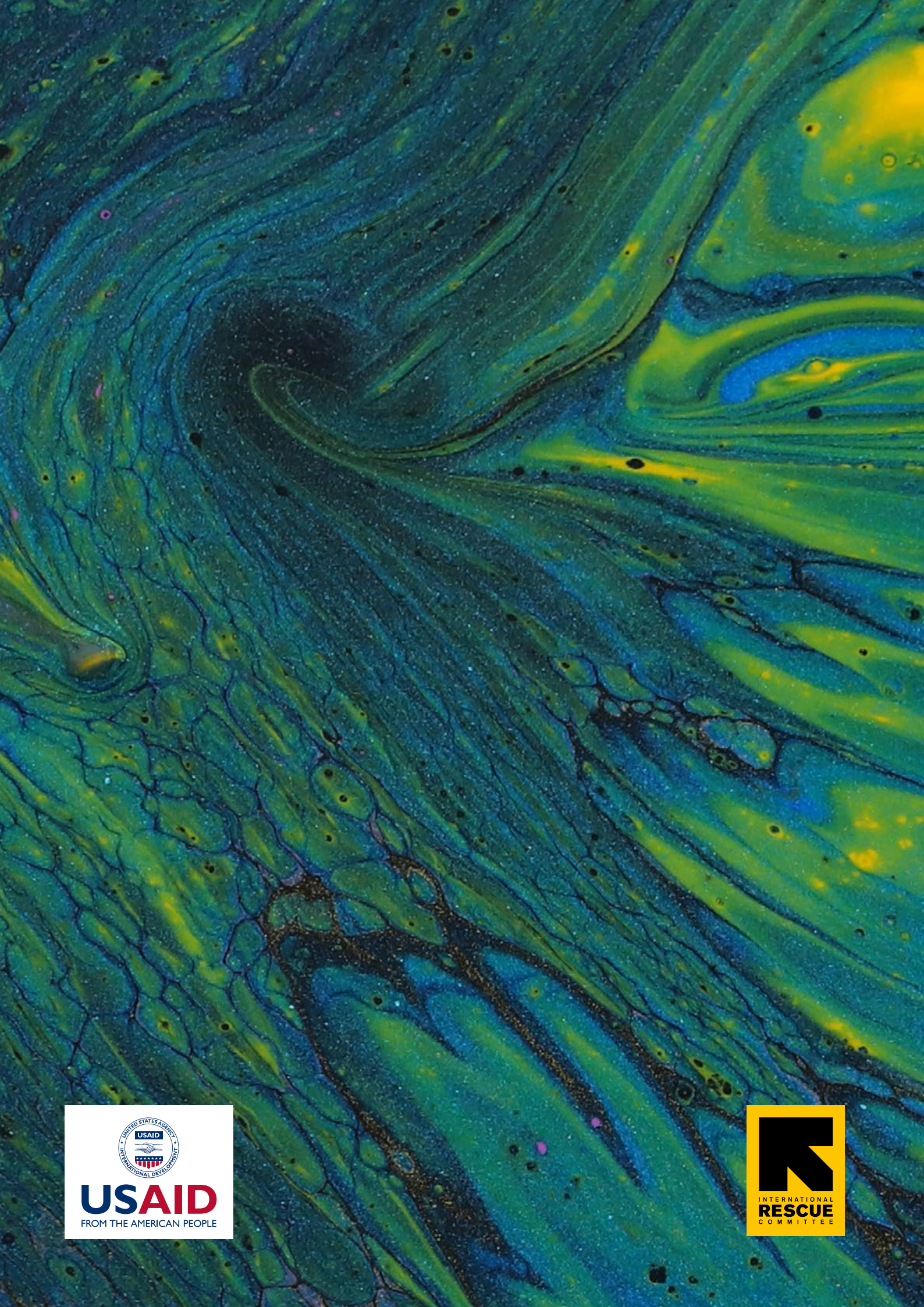
**Transgender:** A person whose gender identity does not correspond with the gender assigned to them at birth. Transgender can be shortened to "trans." [Irvine and Canfield, adapted by Dynarski]

**Third gender:** Can be used to describe people or communities who identify outside of the gender binary but is more often used to refer to a person or group of people who have a specific gender identity that may or may not be legally recognized. Third gender groups include the *metis* of Nepal and the *hijra* of Bangladesh, both of whom have legal third gender recognition as well as specific social, cultural, and economic roles that they play in their respective societies. Third gender is not interchangeable with non-binary, gender queer or gender-fluid. [Edge Effect, 42 Degree Library]

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