

# Protecting LGBTIQ+ people in situations of forced displacement

## A Stocktaking on UNHCR progress since the 2021 Roundtable



*Cover photo: UNHCR participation at Amsterdam Canal Parade*

**June 2023**

This document is for general distribution. All rights reserved. Reproductions and translations are authorized, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged. © United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, June 2023  
Division of International Protection

## 1. Background

In June 2021 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (UN IE SOGI) co-convened a global roundtable on “*Protection and solutions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) persons in forced displacement*”, with the aim to track progress on protection and solutions for LGBTIQ+ displaced persons, identify current challenges, share good practices, and identify priority areas for collective action.

The event engaged more than 600 participants over three weeks of thematic discussions and resulted in a [conclusion paper](#) presenting a long series of recommendations addressed to UNHCR, UN IE SOGI, States, NGOs, and other stakeholders. While recommendations were tailored to the addressed entities, a series of common cross-cutting areas were also identified, including intersectionality; participation and inclusion; evidence base through data collection/ data management/reporting; capacity of frontline practitioners; global networking across practitioners; and strategic advocacy with States on critical aspects of access to asylum, livelihood and economic inclusion, specialized services, legislative reform, humanitarian admission pathways and resource mobilization.

One and half year from the Roundtable UNHCR undertook a stocktaking exercise at Headquarters and with regional bureaux, to assess progress made against the recommendations addressed to UNHCR. The exercise provided UNHCR with an overview on recommendations on which the organization has already acted upon, identified good

practices, and highlighted gaps in advancing UNHCR’s commitments towards ensuring protection and facilitating solution for persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in situations of forced displacement.

This document summarizes main areas of progress that have been identified through the stocktaking exercise, and actions planned to continue advancing in this important aspect of UNHCR’s work with displaced and stateless people.

## 2. Scope and method of the exercise

The stocktaking exercise was conducted between September 2022 and March 2023. Overall, some 30 UNHCR staff and senior managers were consulted in Headquarters and some 50 at regional level.

Ten areas of work were identified to assess UNHCR’s progress in advancing and promoting protection and solutions for LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement. These areas broadly align with the thematic areas of the Roundtable and the clusters of recommendations. They included:

- Capacity development and learning
- Access to asylum and Refugee Status Determination (RSD)
- Registration and safe data collection
- Resettlement and complementary pathways
- Outreach and community engagement
- Inclusive health services
- Other services (GBV, safe shelters)
- Livelihood and economic inclusion
- Engaging with LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations
- Organizational leadership

### 3. Main areas of progress

#### 3.1. Capacity development and learning

##### 3.1.1. Develop and mainstream learning on LGBTIQ+ protection

UNHCR continued to invest in developing the capacity of its workforce and partners to deliver LGBTIQ+ inclusive activities. This was done largely through blended learning programmes, offered in different languages, and dedicated to UNHCR protection staff, as well as through promoting foundational online self-paced learning initiatives addressed to a wider audience of UNHCR and partner staff worldwide. In developing, adapting, and delivering the training material, UNHCR often worked with LGBTIQ+ organisations, especially at regional level, to include their views and lived experience.

#### Training progress

Type of training	By end 2021	By June 2023	Participant countries
Learning programs	403	512	88
Training of Trainers	111	111	
E-learning in English and Spanish	148	803 (739 EN and 64 SP)	

In September 2021, UNHCR and IOM released an updated version of the joint training package on [SOGIESC and working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement](#). The package is an online resource for UNHCR and IOM staff and for the broader humanitarian community. The training modules cover a variety of topics, including respectful terminology, international legal framework, protection challenges and vulnerabilities of people with diverse SOGIESC, effective interactions, inclusive services, and technical aspects of interviewing and Refugee Status Determination (RSD). The material has been translated into French and Spanish in 2022, and selected thematic units are being revised

to reflect additional concepts, considerations, and practices, including in cooperation with LGBTIQ+ organisations.

To strengthen the ability of UNHCR staff in field operations to utilize the IOM-UNHCR training package on SOGIESC and working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement, UNHCR developed a dedicated **Training of Trainers (ToT)**, with the aim of creating a pool of confident trainers, capable of delivering the training modules competently and multiplying outreach and knowledge sharing. As of 2023, over 100 graduates from the Training of Trainers (TOT) are available as resources in all seven regions to disseminate knowledge in their operations.

**Based on the UNHCR-IOM learning package, UNHCR developed a blended learning programme** addressed to protection staff to develop a comprehensive knowledge of working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement and enabling staff to take the role of LGBTIQ+ focal points in their respective operation. Since it was developed in 2015, UNHCR has implemented 24 learning programmes targeting a total of 512 staff in all seven UNHCR operational regions. Since the 2021 Roundtable, five cohorts and two TOTs have been implemented, contextualised, and offered in different languages.

The learning program was offered in 2022 in the **Asia Pacific region**, addressing 32 protection, registration and community-based protection staff responding to emergencies in the region over a period of 12 weeks. As part of their learning project, the graduates of the programme have subsequently organised thematic sensitisation sessions within their operations. Benefitting from a dedicated human resource, one country operation in the region tailored the training program and organised sensitisation sessions with protection partner staff, interpreters, helpline operators, and outreach volunteers reaching more than 200 persons.

The same learning program also targeted the **Americas region** in the second half of 2022, gathering 44 participants from 11 countries. UNHCR collaborated with its partners [COMCAVIS TRANS](#) and [Caribe Afirmativo](#) in the facilitation and in adapting the content of the training. [Bianka Rodrigues](#), President of COMCAVIS and UNHCR's Good Will Ambassador, brought her expertise and context-specific knowledge on challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ displaced and stateless people in the Americas region, and suggestions on how to effectively create and manage safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ persons. Based on the knowledge acquired in the learning program, in **Peru**, UNHCR staff provided seven training sessions on respectful attitudes and communication, ethical referrals as well as on registration of LGBTIQ+ persons in UNHCR registration and identity management system (ProGres), targeting 321 participants from UNHCR and partners, and including the *Special Commission on Refugees*.

**In 2022, UNHCR launched an online self-paced course on “[Working with LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement](#)”.** This is a foundational course to introduce concepts and principles on working with people of diverse SOGIECS, to develop a basic knowledge on communication, as well as on creating inclusive, respectful, and safe interactions and spaces for forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ persons. The Spanish and French versions of the e-learning were released in May 2023 and are already getting traction amongst UNHCR's staff in the Americas region and in the francophone regions of Africa. Since its launch in May 2022, the online course was accessed by 803 learners across UNHCR operations. An Arabic version will be released before the end of 2023.

**UNHCR also invested in producing short training products**, including podcasts, interactive files and short videos, which offer a rapid way to disseminate key concepts on [SOGIESC](#) and [LGBTIQ+](#) terminology.



UNHCR short video on LGBTIQ+:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2KKm3mRJ34>



UNHCR short video on SOGIESC:

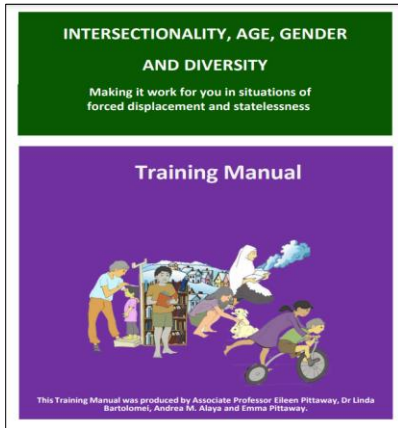
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol25KSCMHnw>

Efforts to promote the LGBTIQ+ learning products were regularly undertaken through annual broadcasts, newsletters, and communities of practice, such as the those managed by Community-based Protection Unit, the Public Health Unit, as well as the internal LGBTIQ+ page for UNHCR staff managed by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Section of the Division of Human Resources.

UNHCR mainstreamed LGBTIQ+ related learning and integrated content on the protection and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in forced displacement in various other thematic areas. This includes the updated modules of [the Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) E-learning](#), which was released in February 2023, the *Training Package on Community-Based Protection*, which will be released in 2023, the *RSD Learning Programme* and the *Interviewing for Protection Learning Programme*.



In the second half of 2022, a new [training package](#) on the concept of Intersectionality and UNHCR’s Age, Gender and Diversity Policy included diverse SOGIESC among the various aspects of personal characteristics that can overlap and exacerbate discrimination and exclusion. The package (video, Facilitator’s Guide, and training material) was jointly developed by UNHCR and the University of New South Wales (UNSW).



*Training MANUAL on intersectionality*

### **3.1.2. Updating and dissemination of guidance and best practices**

In fall 2021 UNHCR updated its [“Need to Know Guidance: Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Persons in Forced Displacement”](#). The tool contains a series of practical advice addressed to field operation on working with LGBTIQ+ persons including key principles and concepts and suggestions to address protection risks faced by LGBTIQ+ people and design responses that take into consideration safety, confidentiality, unhindered access to services and cross-cutting actions. The Guidance is available in English, French and Spanish, and is currently being translated into Arabic with an expected release in 2023.

UNHCR is finalizing a multilingual **glossary of SOGIESC terms** expanding it with an Arabic version that has been recently developed in cooperation with LGBTIQ+ organizations from

the Middle East and North Africa region. This will also inform [UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms](#).

To support the implementation of the AGD Policy, in late 2021 UNHCR produced a **set of tip sheets on how to apply the Policy in UNHCR’s work with groups with diverse characteristics, including SOGIESC**. This included a dedicated [Tip Sheet on the AGD Policy and LGBTIQ+ Persons](#). In order to provide field operations with practical examples of implementing LGBTIQ+-inclusive programs, UNHCR documented and disseminated AGD good practices, including on working with LGBTIQ+ people. Examples of practices can be found in the [2021 AGD report on Promising Practices from Europe](#).

### **3.2. Access to Asylum and RSD**

Conducting refugee status determination is the responsibility of the government in countries of asylum and a primary commitment under the 1951 Convention. Only where fair and efficient national asylum systems are not in place, UNHCR may conduct RSD under its Mandate in certain circumstances to advance protection and/or solutions. UNHCR advocates for national asylum systems to be accessible without discrimination, including for persons presenting claims on SOGIESC-based persecution. UNHCR supports the asylum capacity of national systems by commenting on asylum laws, issuing guidance and country of origin information (COI), and supporting asylum system-strengthening through capacity development of asylum authorities and the judiciary. As an example, a reference paper was produced in March 2022 on [effective processing of asylum claims](#). The reference paper highlights the importance of due process and efficient case processing of persons in situation of vulnerability and those with specific needs, such as persons of diverse

SOGIESC. It includes good practices from selected countries.

### **3.2.1. Guidelines on International Protection #9**

UNHCR is continually assessing the ongoing need for updated guidance on key questions around criteria and procedural standards for determining international protection needs, including on grounds of SOGIESC and for survivors or those at risk of trafficking. Research and consultations are underway to examine the way in which existing Guidelines on International Protection (GIP), including the [GIP No 9](#) on claims on refugee status based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity, are used and applied today and canvas informed and expert perspectives on their currency and application.

### **3.2.2. Increase the integrity and quality of RSD decision-making**

UNHCR promotes national asylum systems that operate with fairness, efficiency, adaptability, and integrity. A methodological approach to assessing the credibility of the applicant's statements and establishing the material facts of the claim is crucial in ensuring quality decision making, consistent with international standards.

UNHCR has taken several measures to ensure that the specific needs of LGBTIQ+ persons are continuously considered in guidance documents, and in tools developed to enhance the quality of asylum procedures. Risk profiles on SOGIESC are regularly integrated in country guidance documents (International Protection Considerations, Eligibility Guidelines, Guidance Notes). Examples during the period in review are the International Protection Considerations with regards to people fleeing [Somalia](#) in September 2022, and the Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing [Afghanistan](#) (Update I) in February 2023. These documents contain information about the human rights situation

of LGBTIQ+ persons in their country of origin and highlight their international refugee protection needs to be considered when assessing their claims in countries of asylum. In **Guatemala** UNHCR worked with the *Refugee Status Recognition Department (DRER)* of the Guatemalan Migration Institute in drafting a document on the situation and the profiles of people at risk fleeing Nicaragua, including LGBTIQ+ individuals. The document was submitted to the *National Commission for Refugees (CONARE)* in September 2022 and is currently part of authoritative information for case analysis in Guatemala.

[The 2020 Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate](#) has a specific section on LGBTIQ+ persons. The section highlights the complex array of protection issues regularly faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, the possible challenges that LGBTIQ+ individuals may encounter in articulating their asylum claims during RSD procedures, the importance of providing sensitive support throughout the RSD process by adequately trained staff. This document was translated and made available in Spanish (in 2021) and in French (in 2022) to facilitate dissemination to various country operations.

The implementation of the procedural Standards and the quality of RSD decisions under UNHCR's mandate are fostered through multiple layers of reviews and continuous capacity development.

### **3.2.3. Integrate SOGIESC-related content in RSD learning products**

UNHCR continued to mainstream the inclusion of SOGIESC components in its RSD learning products. UNHCR is currently updating the RSD module of the UNHCR-IOM joint training package on SOGIESC in forced displacement, an internal resource targeting RSD eligibility officers to develop their capacity in assessing refugee claims based on SOGIESC. The release

of the updated learning product is expected in 2023.

The ***Interviewing for Protection Learning Programme (IPLP)*** focuses on protection-oriented interviewing techniques and integrates content on interviewing LGBTIQ+ individuals (scenarios, case studies). IPLP targets UNHCR personnel, to enable them to interact and collect individual information in a sensitive manner. The training incorporates an advanced learning pathway specifically dedicated to RSD practitioners.

The ***RSD Learning Programme***, targets UNHCR RSD practitioners in countries where UNHCR conducts RSD under its Mandate and in operations working with national asylum systems. It includes a module dedicated to SOGIESC refugee claims and protection considerations related to LGBTIQ+ applicants in the RSD procedures. **Since 2021, three cohorts of the RSD Learning Programme have been delivered, addressing UNHCR personnel in the Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Americas, Europe, and MENA regions.** 75 UNHCR RSD and protection staff benefited from the blended program, which was delivered over 18 weeks of self-study and a week-long workshop.

In addition, e-learning products are also made available to all UNHCR staff to enhance their knowledge of RSD procedures under UNHCR's mandate. UNHCR continued to engage with regional bureaux and country operations to enhance awareness on diverse SOGIESC issues and technical skills, and to develop capacity of staff members to consider SOGIESC issues during RSD interviews and the adjudication SOGIESC refugee claims. As an example, a technical RSD training was conducted at the end of 2022 targeting RSD case workers with the aim to improve mandate RSD processing for LGBTIQ+ persons in the Southern Africa region.

### ***3.2.4. Court interventions and working with the judiciary***

Over the years, UNHCR intervened as "*amicus curiae*" in several court interventions addressing issues of concealment, procedural safeguards (e.g., on accelerated procedures in SOGIESC claims), credibility assessments (e.g., on intrusive questioning and the use of medical testing). These interventions, many of which also predate the 2021 Roundtable, are publicly available on UNHCR [Refworld](#) and other case law databases.

The practice continued in the period under review. For instance, in October 2022 UNHCR filed an intervention in the case of [M.I. v Switzerland](#), in relation to the practice of denying protection to a SOGIESC claimant on the basis that the person could conceal or be '*discrete*' about his SOGIESC if returned to the country of origin and therefore was not in need of international protection.

UNHCR continued to undertake capacity development activities for the legal community, in particular bar associations and judges, in co-operation with the [International Association of Refugee and Migration Judges](#). Those activities focus on the legal issues and considerations arising in SOGIESC claims and aim at promoting the consistent and correct interpretation and application of the 1951 Convention. UNHCR intervened on the topic of diverse SOGIESC in international refugee law at the 2022 edition of the [University of Leiden Summer School on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Law](#), which gathered legal practitioners, government officials, advocates, and activists.

UNHCR is contributing to the [development of a comprehensive online training module for the Council of Europe's Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals \(HELP\)](#), to increase the capacity of legal professionals (including judges) in all 46 member states, deal with asylum claims based on sexual orientation, gender identity or

expression and sex characteristics. The module will be finalized later this year.

### 3.3. Registration and safe data collection

#### 3.3.1. *Safe and inclusive recording of SOGIESC data in UNHCR's systems and registration procedures*

UNHCR's registration and identity management system (proGres) and [UNHCR Registration Guidance](#) already facilitate the recording of information related to certain aspects of SOGIESC, relationships for same-sex partners, and specific protection needs, based on the voluntary disclosure and informed consent of the individuals. A secured case management module that is used by trained protection staff and LGBTIQ+ focal points allow for the safe recording of specific protection concerns that require referrals. UNHCR provided regular training to registration staff on these aspects, as well as on ways of building a safe environment for self-disclosure. Data collection continued to be guided by UNHCR [Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern](#) and by a newly issued [General Policy on Personal Data and Privacy](#), which requires additional safeguards for the processing of sensitive personal data and enhanced data protection.

Efforts are ongoing to better analyse practices from UNHCR operations, improve consistency in the use of the existing features in UNHCR's registration and identity management system, as well as explore ways to improve the safe and inclusive recording of SOGIESC data in UNHCR's systems. In doing so, UNHCR remains mindful about the purpose for collecting data, and that proportionality of data collected and informed consent around the collection of data must always be considered before collecting additional data.

In the second half of 2022, the Division of International Protection (DIP), and the Global

Data Service (GDS) organised a series of consultations with regional bureaux and selected operations to gain a better understanding of the needs, the challenges, and the existing practices in inclusive and safe collection and recording of SOGIESC data of asylum-seekers and refugees. The analysis revealed some positive practices in a few countries, for instance where UNHCR managed to align with progressive legislation accepting gender identity based on declaration. In some operations, UNHCR developed contextualized guidance and SOPs on the recording of cases with SOGIESC elements and consulted with national actors on appropriate language and terminology. The inter-divisional work in this domain needs to continue, to be able to provide more guidance and training to operations and assess whether enhanced and additional technical and organizational measures for the processing of sensitive personal data are needed.

*In the context of resettlement procedures, since August 2022 UNHCR has implemented a data tool to help the process of discrete and secure collection and storage of data of LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers who have shared their diverse SOGIESC with UNHCR, as well as other groups that may be at specific risk in the country of asylum. The tool has been implemented with enhanced safeguards for running queries and exporting data from UNHCR's registration and identity management system (ProGres v4). System permissions are strictly limited to resettlement personnel with specific roles and responsibilities. The tool facilitates monitoring of resettlement cases involving LGBTIQ+ persons who have shared relevant SOGIESC information with UNHCR at all stages of resettlement processing, including submissions which are pending with resettlement countries, as well as decisions and departures. Although data is not comprehensive and does not account for LGBTIQ+ persons who have not*



*shared SOGIESC information with UNHCR, the tool provides relevant data attesting to the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons in resettlement programs and additional indicators such as the sex, location, and country of origin of individuals. The tool is rolled out in all UNHCR operations using proGres v4, which accounts for almost all resettlement processing globally, with few exceptions. The roll out of the proGres v4 tool was accompanied by dedicated training to operations and regional bureaux that started in 2022.*

### **3.4. Resettlement and complementary pathways**

The identification of refugees in need of resettlement remained an integral part of UNHCR's national and regional protection and solutions strategies. LGBTIQ+ refugees may be considered for resettlement based on an assessment of their protection risks in the country of asylum, considering the individual's specific needs, personal background, and capacity to overcome protection challenges.

During the year 2022, UNHCR further revised its **global guidance on resettlement**. The [Resettlement Handbook](#) released at the beginning of May 2023 contains operational guidance specifically related to the resettlement of LGBTIQ+ refugees to ensure that their needs are identified and assessed, and the case workers have the skills to appropriately interview and counsel the concerned refugees. These references are made in areas such as resettlement planning; communication with communities; identification of intersectional protection risks faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals; modalities of supporting the principle of family unity;

techniques for interviewing individuals and for the sensitive handling of personal information, especially with regards to persons who have suffered violence and/or torture and those who are adolescents or children. NGOs with relevant operational presence and expertise working on LGBTIQ+ issues have been engaged in the reference group created to reviewing the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook. In 2023, new learning and training opportunities related to the revised Resettlement Handbook will integrate LGBTIQ+ issues and will continue to involve civil society organizations.

In 2022, UNHCR submitted 116,481 refugees for resettlement and 58,457 refugees departed for resettlement. Of those who departed, at least 306 persons had provided SOGIESC information to UNHCR. Those refugees with a disclosed LGBTIQ+ profile originated from 32 different countries of origin and 27 countries of asylum<sup>1</sup>. Most were registered as male, and a few were adolescents. In addition, at the end of 2022, at least 848 persons who had provided SOGIESC information to UNHCR were waiting for States to process their resettlement case or were waiting for departure arrangements<sup>2</sup>.

A dedicated session on LGBTIQ+ solutions was integrated in the **Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR)** in June 2022 and included a panel with refugee representation. The ATCR is the biggest international forum on resettlement, including civil society organizations and resettlement countries as well as an increasing number of refugee participants and other relevant stakeholders. Following the ATCR a multilateral States' forum (the Priority Situations Core Group) included a session on the resettlement needs of LGBTIQ+ people and specific protection considerations.

<sup>1</sup> Resettlement countries included the United States, Sweden, Australia, Canada, France, Norway, Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands.

<sup>2</sup> This included resettlement submissions by UNHCR in 2022 or previous years to the United States (> 50%), Canada, Australia,

Germany, New Zealand, Norway, France, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, and Sweden.

While the exact data on **complementary pathways** access by refugees remains to be determined, there are indications of significant numbers already attaining access to third countries on family reunification, labour, and education opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Ensuring that LGBTIQ+ people are included in outreach efforts and are given equal access to opportunities through complementary pathways, education, and labour mobility remains a priority for UNHCR. Certain country operations have already built strategies on complementary pathways and relevant standard operating procedures, with specific components of communication strategies for the identification and attraction of marginalized groups, including LGBTIQ+ persons. An **operating guidance on complementary pathways** is currently under development and contains specific methodologies of outreach and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals in the skills-based opportunities.

Traditionally, sponsorship pathways have been a steady route towards solutions for LGBTIQ+ persons, particularly in the context of the Canadian and Australian private sponsorship schemes. They continue to represent a viable option for many individuals at risk to find safety in a third country and should be strategically utilized. At times, humanitarian admission programs for specific population have also proven to be a useful tool towards solutions to safety and are being further explored for the LGBTIQ+ population as a programmatic area.

As same sex partnerships are not always recognized by the authorities in several countries, access to meaningful family reunification within the established procedures remains a challenge and has often been resolved through reliance on private

sponsorship schemes for those individuals. UNHCR has worked on **Operational Guidelines of Family Reunification that will be issued later in 2023** uses a wide definition of family based on dependency. This will serve as a solid advocacy basis for inclusion of same-sex refugee families in the family reunification procedures.

### 3.5. Outreach and community engagement

#### 3.5.1. *Communication and access to information*

As a part of its commitment to **Accountability to Affected People**, UNHCR continued to invest in **effective two-way communication** on services, assistance, and access to rights for refugees worldwide. As of 2023, UNHCR operates 115 active **HELP webpages** (with 41 additional pages in the pipeline) providing access to information in 32 languages on asylum procedures, rights, and services available to forcibly displaced and stateless persons. These sites had over 14 million visitors by the end of 2022. Where appropriate and in agreement with the service providers, UNHCR operations provided a **dedicated space on their country's UNHCR Help Page site to publicize safe services and organizations supporting LGBTIQ+ individuals in the country**. Example of such sites are found in [Brazil](#), [Ecuador](#), [Greece](#), [Guatemala](#), [Italy](#), [Kenya](#), [Poland](#), [Switzerland and Lichtenstein](#), and [Tunisia](#).

UNHCR produces **safe space communication materials** in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, and Russian and disseminates to regional bureaux and country operations. These communication materials, including posters, wristbands, stickers, and pins aims at providing a sense of inclusion and safety for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced persons when approaching

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR OECD Safe Pathways for Refugees Report Dashboard: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNmEwNzdkZmQtMjM2Ni00YTg2LWlyMmUtNzkwNjYyMzliMmE3IiwidCI6ImU1YzZM3O>

[TgxLTY2NiQtNDEzNC04YTBiLTly1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh](https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNmEwNzdkZmQtMjM2Ni00YTg2LWlyMmUtNzkwNjYyMzliMmE3IiwidCI6ImU1YzZM3O)  
[9](#)

UNHCR offices. Some regions adapted outreach materials to their contexts, through culturally sensitive messaging and appropriate choice of languages and visuals, also with the support of LGBTIQ+ organizations. For instance, to ensure the safe use of visibility materials targeting LGBTIQ+ people, an operation in the **Asia Pacific** region consulted with an LGBTIQ+ expert in the region and conducted a risk assessment by engaging with LGBTIQ+ members of the community to understand their perceptions on LGBTIQ+ visibility materials.



Safe Space materials produced and disseminated by UNHCR



IDAHOBIT materials in the MENA region were produced in consultation with LGBTIQ+ CSOs

### 3.5.2. Outreach and community engagement

UNHCR applies participatory and community-based methodologies in engaging with diverse age, gender, and diversity groups. In 2022, fourteen operations reported having specifically addressed LGBTIQ+ persons with dedicated participatory assessments. Several operations, reach out to LGBTIQ+ persons through household visits, accessible hotlines, protection desks, and LGBTIQ+ outreach volunteers. The following are some examples.

In **Kenya** LGBTIQ+ refugees in Kakuma and Dadaab received information through individual counselling and ad hoc meetings with UNHCR and partner staff, during which specific concerns could be raised. In Nairobi, LGBTIQ+ refugees received information through individual counselling, group sessions and inclusion in activities conducted by national LGBTIQ+ organizations.

In **Brazil**, monthly meetings were organized in safe spaces with LGBTIQ+ displaced Venezuelans living in the north of the country to better understand their issues of concern and proposed solutions. UNHCR Brazil also put in place a system of refugee volunteers, including LGBTIQ+ persons, to better reach out and maintain a dialogue with LGBTIQ+ displaced populations. A similar system of outreach volunteers is in place in **El Salvador** with UNHCR partner COMCAVIS, with communication through digital solutions such as WhatsApp groups. A series of participatory assessments were conducted specifically with LGBTIQ+ groups and information points were established in three shelters and two community centers run by UNHCR-funded partners COMCAVIS Trans, **DIKE**, and **ASPIDH**.

In **Lebanon**, an outreach volunteer program, including LGBTIQ+ volunteers, and LGBTIQ+ youth and peer support groups, undertook sensitive awareness-raising outreach strategies. To support outreach and access to services, the operation engages with over

fifteen safe civil society organizations (including through partnership agreements with [Helem](#) and [Amel](#)).

In **Moldova**, UNHCR collaborated with the partners NGO [Genderdoc-M](#) and [Moldova for Peace](#) in conducting a series of focus group discussions with LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees as part of UNHCR's participatory assessment. The results of these discussions are used to provide LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees with targeted information, increase the availability of safe spaces to access services, and identify LGBTIQ+ community projects for possible support in 2023.

### **3.5.3. Participation at global level**

In October 2022, UNHCR established an [Advisory Board](#), consisting of 16 organizations-led by displaced and stateless people from all seven regions covered by UNHCR regional bureaux. Over the next two years (2023-2024) the Board will provide advice on inclusiveness to UNHCR's "*Task Team on Meaningful Participation and Engagement with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People*". Amongst the sixteen selected organizations, one is a LGBTIQ+ refugee-led organization working towards inclusion of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people through the provision of services and capacity development. The Advisory Board has participated in the official preparatory meetings of the Global Refugee Forum.

Since January 2020, the ATCR has a **Refugee Advisory Group** with representatives from national, regional, and global refugee-led networks, as well as representatives with lived refugee experience who now deliver services to newly resettled refugees or engage in advocacy in local communities. The group includes LGBTIQ+ representation and has an advisory role in the planning cycle of the ATCR, liaising between the Chair and the refugee community, coordinating refugee participation

and statements at the ATCR and at the Working Group on Resettlement.

### **3.6. Inclusive Health Services**

UNHCR advocates for and prioritizes the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons in health services and referral pathways. [The global public health strategy 2021-2025](#) provides guidance on the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons in all phases of programme cycle management.

Investment continued in capacity strengthening of UNHCR and partner staff. The [Training of Trainer Package for Sexual and Reproductive Health \(SRH\) in Humanitarian Settings](#), a joint initiative with UNFPA, integrates the needs of LGBTIQ+ persons as a cross-cutting theme as well as through a dedicated section on tailored services. Two training workshops have taken place to date, addressing some 50 health professionals through one global training of trainers (TOT), and a national training in Cox's Bazar in 2022. Additional training is planned jointly with UNFPA in 2023 and beyond.

In 2022, UNHCR developed an *Introduction to Public Health* e-learning which targets UNHCR staff across all sectors. The e-learning addresses health needs of all persons, with a specific section on LGBTIQ+ persons.

The UNHCR-UNFPA joint guidance on [Responding to the health and protection needs of people selling or exchanging sex in humanitarian settings](#) was published in June 2022 and includes reference to the importance of specific measures and adapted services to reach transgender and males selling sex. UNHCR has consequently upscaled its programs and provided capacity strengthening to UNHCR and partners' staff as well as dedicated support to country operations.

UNHCR contributed to the inter-agency [Minimum Services Package for Mental health](#)



[and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#) and advocated for the inclusion of considerations on MHPSS needs of LGBTIQ+ persons.

In 2023, the UNHCR [Toolkit for Multisectoral Action Planning for Prevention and Risk Mitigation of Suicide in Refugee Settings](#) was released, which integrates LGBTIQ+ persons as a population at risk.

In **Colombia**, UNHCR coordinated with the public health departments of various territorial entities to strengthen protocols for the provision of health service to LGBTIQ+ persons who required emergency or specialized services. With the partner [Caribe Afirmativo12](#), a dedicated guide for dignified and effective health care for trans women and non-binary refugees was compiled and disseminated through UNHCR staff, public institutions, and civil society. Across **Colombia**, through UNHCR-funded and operational partners [Profamilia](#) and [Ligasida](#), LGBTIQ+ refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons living with HIV were provided with antiretroviral therapy, access to HIV tests, counselling, and referral to sexual and reproductive health services.

In **Kenya**, UNHCR's healthcare partner in Kakuma manages a drop-in centre, which serves as a safe space for LGBTIQ+ refugees to seek healthcare and at the same time gain knowledge of relevant issues that affect them. LGBTIQ+ refugees are recruited to work in healthcare facilities in the camps, as health and peer educators, to ensure proximity and confidence in access to services for LGBTIQ+ refugees. UNHCR's partners provide psychosocial support to GBV survivors including LGBTIQ+ survivors. With direct support from UNHCR, a GBV partner in Kakuma employed two additional staff, who received specific training and have expertise in working with people with diverse SOGIESC and focus exclusively on providing case management services to LGBTIQ+ refugees.

Similarly, UNHCR's partner in Dadaab employs four LGBTIQ+ refugees as outreach staff engaged in facilitating referral of LGBTIQ+ persons reporting GBV and protection incidents.

In **El Salvador**, UNHCR supported a local organization running a medical clinic and providing support to trans women and men, including hormonal treatment, not available through the national public health care system. In July 2022 UNHCR also supported the first international congress held in the country on the health of transgender individuals.

### **3.7. Other services (GBV, safe shelters)**

To address the protection needs of LGBTIQ+ persons, UNHCR adopts a mainstreaming approach aimed at creating services that are safe, accessible, and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ individuals and their expressed needs. A review of 2023 country operations protection and solution strategies showed that 38 out of 105 UNHCR operations specifically addressed inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in their strategies and included their needs in situation analysis.

In GBV programming specifically, UNHCR promoted the engagement with LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations (CSOs) and refugee-led groups as part of UNHCR GBV response and promoted their **participation in Inter-Agency GBV coordination mechanisms in refugee and mixed settings**. 46 LGBTIQ+ CSOs have been actively engaged as members of GBV sub-working group in refugee settings in 2022 (4.5% increase compared to 2021). Cooperation with LGBTIQ+ organisations has also taken place in training frontline workers on the provision of GBV services that are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ persons and in establishing safe referral pathways and safe shelters.

At interagency level, UNHCR has contributed to ensure the **integration of SOGIESC in the Inter-Agency GBV SOPs Resource Package** currently under finalization in collaboration

with the GBV Area of Responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster. Specifically, UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ in the referral pathway template.

UNHCR is supporting the **finalization of the GBV case management e-learning** that has been developed by UNFPA under the auspices of the GBV-IMS steering committee. The e-learning includes a section on working with LGBTIQ+ survivors which will be key in strengthening GBV case managers' skills. The GBV IMS steering committee is currently undertaking an analysis to review options to enhance the inclusiveness of its intake form. Once the analysis will be completed at the end of 2023, UNHCR GBVIMS expert will provide technical support to modify relevant GBVIMS tools.

Aside promoting UNHCR's corporate training products on SOGIESC amongst staff and partners, UNHCR has also integrated a session on working with LGBTIQ+ survivors as part of its **GBV Minimum Standards Course**, a blended induction program for GBV staff. The session has so far been attended by 112 staff working on GBV programming.

In **Lebanon**, UNHCR and partners undertook case management for LGBTIQ+ individuals at risk. Services included psychosocial support with specialized counselling and medical support for GBV survivors (100% coverage for clinical management of rape services). The operation undertook periodic review of all protection referral pathways with partners to ensure that they remained inclusive and adapted to the needs of LGBTIQ+ refugees. Emergency cash assistance was provided to LGBTIQ+ persons for urgent protection needs. In several operations in **MENA**, cash for shelter programs targeted LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum-seekers to overcome barriers to housing, and transportation was provided to enable safe access and referrals of LGBTIQ+ persons to basic services.

In **Romania**, UNHCR ensured that its partners' services for GBV survivors are available and accessible to members of the LGBTIQ+ community and has established a collaboration and referral mechanism with MozaIQ, an NGO working with the LGBTIQ+ community in Bucharest and other cities providing legal assistance, psychosocial support, job and education orientation, and shelter. In **Hungary**, UNHCR continued to cooperate with the LGBTIQ+ NGOs Budapest Pride and Hatter Society/Association to develop GBV referral pathways, including on safe accommodation, and conducted safety assessments inclusive of LGBTIQ+ refugees.

In **El Salvador**, UNHCR supported three LGBTIQ+ organizations, directly or through its partner IRC, to provide services to LGBTIQ+ displaced, including GBV services. The partnership will continue in 2023. In **Colombia**, UNHCR supported a group of seven local organizations working with LGBTIQ+ persons via community outreach, sensitization and GBV services. By partnering with [LAMBDA](#), a local LGBTIQ+ civil society actor in **Guatemala**, UNHCR continued to enhance GBV specialized programming for LGBTIQ+ survivors of GBV. LAMBDA assisted LGBTIQ+ survivors or at risk of GBV to access multisectoral services, offering some 2,270 interventions in 2022 overall while also providing training to key actors including State Institutions.

In **Malawi**, UNHCR and its partners conducted regular assessments in the refugee camp including through direct consultation with LGBTIQ+ persons who disclosed their diverse SOGIESC to UNHCR. For cases with serious protection concerns living in urban areas, UNHCR worked with partners and provided protection services including shelter in a safe house operated by the [Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation \(CHRR\)](#). These protection mechanisms are now jeopardized by the encampment policies recently imposed

by the authorities and UNHCR continues its advocacy to preserve an “out-of-camp” strategy in the refugee response.

In Mae La, Umpium, and Nupo refugee camps in Mae Sot, **Thailand**, UNHCR conducted awareness raising on the specific protection risks and needs of LGBTIQ+ persons to GBV Committees and camp leaders. In addition, focus group discussions helped identify specific challenges affecting LGBTIQ+ persons. The consultations highlighted the needs for dedicated reporting mechanisms and tailored responses for LGBTIQ+ individuals, including dedicated safehouses for different categories of survivors.



*Photo of safe space poster in front of an office in Mae La camp*

UNHCR **Uganda** operation established a Gender and LGBTIQ+ focal point system in almost all refugee settlements. They are valuable resources to create safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ individuals and provide technical support to colleagues and partners. Gender mainstreaming and LGBTIQ+ trainings for UNHCR and partners have been conducted in refugee-hosting areas in the South-West. The country office regularly met with LGBTIQ+ groups in Kampala to listen to their concerns and provide support. In **Kenya**, a safe house for the physical protection of displaced persons at risk, including LGBTIQ+ individuals at risk of physical harm or harassment, was utilized as a

temporary accommodation center for the individuals awaiting resettlement solutions.

### **3.8. Livelihood and economic inclusion**

In several operations, UNHCR promoted safe and dignified access for LGBTIQ+ persons to decent work, resources, and services, including employment opportunities in the digital economy. UNHCR also advocated for the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ displaced and stateless persons in the livelihood and economic inclusion initiatives by other humanitarian and development partners. Of all UNHCR country operations using [UNHCR Livelihoods Information System](#), 25% reported the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons in their livelihoods and economic inclusion programmes in 2022. The figure currently stands at 40% for 2023.

**In Brazil**, The Companies with Refugees Forum - an initiative of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Global Compact Brazil - and the [LGBTI+ Business and Rights Forum](#) introduced a [Note on the Employability of LGBTIQ+ Refugees](#). The document provides information on hiring LGBTIQ+ refugees, data about this population, testimonials from companies and advocates for LGBTIQ+ inclusion. A partnership with the biggest retailer store BEMOL favoured the training and recruiting of LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants and raised awareness on their rights to better navigate the Brazilian job market.

**In Chile**, UNHCR supported LGBTIQ+ refugee and migrant entrepreneurs, through the delivery of small-scale funds and trainings, and advocated for the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants in the National Entrepreneur Network. In **El Salvador**, UNHCR and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MINEDUCYT), in coordination with local LGBTIQ+ organizations, developed a joint initiative on access to decent employment for LGBTIQ+ individuals. Through

this initiative, twenty-five transgender individuals received a monthly stipend equivalent to the current minimum wage for three months and psycho-pedagogical support for a period of four months to prepare and attend a standard test and be able to access the labour market in the country. Some transgender women were also able to be employed through UNHCR's initiative "Mi Primer Trabajo"<sup>5</sup>, accessing also the national social protection system in the country.

In **Kenya**, UNHCR's partners continue to include LGBTIQ+ refugees in skills development, business training, and business start-up support, with programs developed in consultation with LGBTIQ+ refugees. Several LGBTIQ+ refugees have benefitted from vocational training activities, including tailoring, hairdressing, and basic computer skills, from the provision of multipurpose cash grants to set up small businesses, and have been engaged in various group livelihoods activities (e.g., soap and detergent production, catering services, and poultry rearing). LGBTIQ+ refugees are also employed by partner organizations in the delivery of inclusive services.

In **Spain**, the [ACOGUE Network](#), a UNHCR partner, provides guidance to companies and recruiters on the right to work for refugees based on the principles of gender equality, diversity, and equal opportunities.

### 3.9. Engaging with LGBTIQ+ organizations

UNHCR maintained a close collaboration with LGBTIQ+-led organisations to better reach out to LGBTIQ+ displaced people, establish safe referral pathways, and enhance services.

In several operations formal partnerships agreements were signed with LGBTIQ+ organisations. In addition, a new modality of partnership was introduced in 2022 to facilitate the cooperation with grassroots organisations. A simplified [Grant Agreement](#) allowed channelling seed funds up to \$12,000

per year to community-based organisations, regardless of their registration status, benefitting also LGBTIQ+ grassroots organisations. A [Refugee-led Innovation Fund](#) also started to provide a grant of up to \$45,000 to support innovative projects by organisations led-by displaced people. Launched in 2022, the refugee-led innovation fund benefitted [17 refugee-led organisations](#) including a local refugee-led organisation in South Africa working with LGBTIQ+ refugees.

In the **Americas region**, UNHCR supported the **Regional LGBTIQ+ Human Mobility Network** in its efforts to create inclusive services and safe referral pathways for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people. This collaboration facilitated the integration of LGBTIQ+-sensitive services into the regional [Support Spaces Network](#), an inter-agency initiative of the [R4V Platform](#). Across the region, 210 support spaces were established along the routes connecting Venezuela and Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. In these spaces some 21 organizations provided specialized services for LGBTIQ+ people who can receive information, orientation, wireless connectivity, psychological first aid, health assistance, and safe access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services.



*Annual event of the Regional Network of the LGBTIQ+ Persons on the Move – Colombia*



In **El Salvador**, UNHCR, in coordination with three LGBTIQ+ organizations, launched a pilot initiative, "Bridging the Gap," focused on school completion for 25 transgender people. Participants received financial assistance, equipment, psychosocial support, and individual and group tutorship for three months to prepare for primary and high school exams.

In one country operation in the **Asia Pacific region** UNHCR's advocacy resulted in the inclusion of national LGBTIQ+ organizations in inter-sectoral coordination mechanism. In the same country, UNHCR became a member of a national *Task Force for Transgender Inclusive Humanitarian Response*, led by a national NGO. UNHCR conducted a legal and protection risk analysis, and a comprehensive mapping of some 35 organizations led by or offering services to LGBTIQ+ persons. The analysis highlighted the different risks and needs of LGBTIQ+ people in the country; it provided a first-hand account of the challenges faced by NGOs supporting LGBTIQ+ persons, and it facilitated the establishment of safe referral pathways.

In the **MENA region**, UNHCR launched a **diversity project on protection and safety of LGBTIQ+ persons in displacement**. This included the establishment of an LGBTIQ+ focal points network gathering civil society organizations from across the region and working to promote learning and information exchanges. The network supported the development of an Arabic Glossary of terms for sexual and gender diversity, of messages for respectful communication, and increased collaboration with civil society and communities.

Through a collaboration amongst UNHCR, the Global Protection Cluster and [ILGA Europe](#), an [Advocacy Note on Protection of LGBTIQ+ people in the Context of the Response in Ukraine was issued](#) in May 2022. The note analyses the main protection risks that people

with diverse SOGIESC may face in situations of displacement within Ukraine and includes a series of key recommendations on inclusive programming for humanitarian actors, in line with UNHCR "*Need to Know Guidelines*".

In **France**, UNHCR signed a grant agreement with [Arc Essentiel](#), a refugee-led organization dedicated to the support and protection of LGBTIQ+ refugees, for the provision of social integration and information sessions. In **Poland** UNHCR collaborated with [Lambda Warszawa](#), [Fundacja Trans-Fuzja](#), [Warsaw House Foundation](#) and other LGBTIQ+ organizations to enhance awareness amongst LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees from Ukraine on referral mechanisms and available protection services, including safe accommodation.

In **South Africa**, UNHCR collaborates with [PASSOP](#), the local refugee-led LGBTIQ+ organisation winner of the 2023 Innovation Fund to facilitate sustained, positive contact among LGBTIQ+ refugees and host community members and leaders through safe community gatherings and education initiatives. . UNHCR also works with the [Triangle project](#), a non-profit human rights organisation offering core services including health, community engagement and empowerment, and Research and Advocacy.

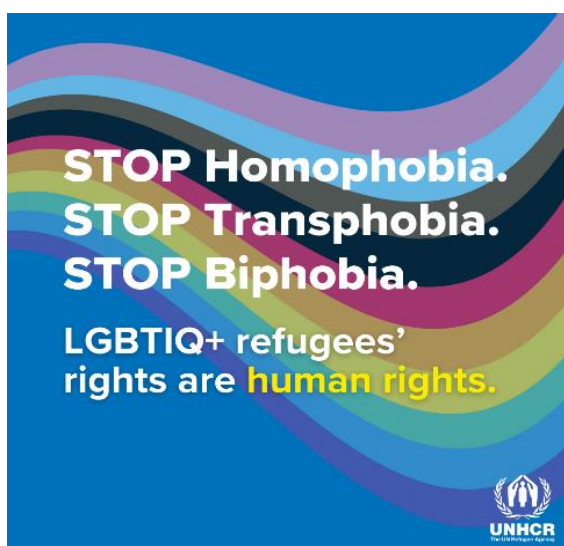
### **3.10. Organizational Leadership**

#### **3.10.1. Reporting and communication**

UNHCR's "[Age, Gender and Diversity \(AGD\) Policy](#)", is one of the agency's core tools to promote the understanding of the impact of intersecting personal characteristics on people's experience of forced displacement and to ensure that people-centred and a participatory approaches are applied across all aspects of UNHCR's work. The Policy requires that programming is inclusive and accessible to all displaced people and responsive to differing levels and types of needs and abilities. The

core elements of the Policy are embedded in [UNHCR 2022 – 2026 Strategic Directions](#) and restated in several other UNHCR internal policies and guidance on planning and programming.

Every year, UNHCR produces an annual [AGD Accountability Report](#) on the progress made against the implementation of the core action of UNHCR AGD Policy. The report further expands the references to LGBTIQ+ activities of UNHCR Global Report<sup>4</sup> and includes a dedicated section on UNHCR’s work with and for LGBTIQ+ refugees and stateless people, highlighting activities, challenges, and field practices in UNHCR operations.



Example of UNHCR social media messages produced on IDAHOBIT 2023

UNHCR actively engages in **global advocacy campaigns on countering discrimination and protecting the human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons in forced displacement**. This included [public statements and press releases by the High Commissioner](#), using various UNHCR platforms and social media to show solidarity and support for LGBTIQ+ displaced people; active dissemination of internal messaging and resources to its own workforce, particularly on commemorative events such as the

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Global Report 2021 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/globalreport2021> and UNHCR

International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOBIT).

Every year, through a close cooperation between DIP, the Division of Human Resources, and the Division of External Relations, UNHCR commemorates **IDAHOBIT** through internal broadcast messages and a dedicated internal webpage reaching all UNHCR staff. These initiatives also aim at sharing key information and training resources for UNHCR staff and managers on LGBTIQ+ related topics and recall the importance of protection for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and of fostering a safe and inclusive workspace for LGBTIQ+ colleagues.



This inter-divisional cooperation also contributes to social media campaigns with [key messages](#) adapted to regional contexts, [real stories](#) about the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ refugees, and various activities in country operations.

UNHCR’s staff commitment to reaffirm respect for diversity and non-discrimination also translated in active participation to Pride events worldwide. The High Commissioner contributed to the celebrations of the [San Francisco Pride in 2022](#), while UNHCR operations worldwide have continued to take

Global Report 2022 <https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-report-2022>

part in Pride events in their respective countries to demonstrate solidarity and to sensitise the wider public on the plight of LGBTIQ+ displaced and stateless people. Examples of recent initiatives included the [Amsterdam Canal Parade](#) (August 2022); the [Pride march in Quito](#) (August 2022); in Arequipa and Lima in Peru (July 2022), in [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (March 2022) as Pride in Hungary (July 2022) and in Moldova (June 2022 and 2023).



Video message of the HC in the S. Francisco “Pride” 2022; Photo taken from AHRC [webpage](#) - credit to Bill Wilson

### **3.10.2. Interagency cooperation on LGBTIQ+ initiatives**

In 2023, UNHCR contributed to updating the UN “Free and Equal Campaign” [Factsheet on Refugee and Asylum](#), which provides basic information on the right to seek asylum, on SOGIESC-based claims, on challenges faced by persons with diverse SOGIESC, and a series of key messages and advocacy points for States. UNHCR cooperation with the UN “[Free and Equal](#)” campaign also contributed to finalizing a glossary of terms, with specific reference to concepts linked to internal displacement and international refugee law.

UNHCR regularly contributes to **external research and reporting**, sharing its experience

in working with persons with diverse SOGIESC in situations of forced displacement. Examples from the period in review include contribution to scholarly research on assessing common challenges faced by the UN when working on SOGIESC, as well as contributions to other reports from other UN Agencies and humanitarian actors on the protection of migrants and refugees with diverse SOGIESC. More recently, UNHCR agreed to become a member of the Advisory board of the IRC/ Edge Effect “*Transform*” project, aimed at developing mechanisms for humanitarian organizations to systematically embed diverse SOGIESC considerations in conflict and displacement response.

To expand the knowledge on LGBTIQ+ persons beyond UNHCR, UNHCR e-learning on diverse SOGIESC is promoted on other global learning platforms managed by other UN agencies (e.g., [Agora](#)). UNHCR has also been contacted by other UN Agencies and humanitarian actors to share its expertise and learning products to support their development of learning material and guidance.

### **3.10.3. UNHCR cooperation with the Independent Expert on SOGI**

UNHCR continued the fruitful **collaboration with the UN Independent Expert (IE) SOGI**, particularly in relation to forcible displacement. On World Refugee Day 2022, the IE SOGI published a dedicated page on the OHCHR-hosted website of the mandate focusing on [LGBTI and Gender-diverse Persons in Forced Displacement](#). UNHCR Human Rights Liaison Unit has produced an internal background note on the IE SOGI mandate and initiatives to increase the knowledge of the mandate across UNHCR field operations as well as on the relevance of the IE SOGI’s work to advance the protection of LGBTIQ+ refugees and internally displaced people. In collaboration with the Global Protection Cluster, DIP also produced a [video](#) with the IE

SOGI on the mandate and relevance of his work to asylum and displacement. In February 2022, UNHCR produced a [compilation of good practices on engaging with human rights mechanisms](#) and included reference on the engagement with the IE SOGI mandate. Cooperation continued also in the context of the visits undertaken by the IE SOGI to various countries.

#### **3.10.4. UNHCR Inclusive Human Resources Policies**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are fundamental pillars of UNHCR's work and key elements of UNHCR's Strategic Directions. In the recent years, the organization has made significant strides in LGBTIQ+ inclusion, articulating its commitment to non-discrimination and workforce diversity through several progressive policy revisions. Firstly, the **new Human Resources Recruitment and Assignments Policy** (October 2022) explicitly acknowledges SOGIESC, fostering a more inclusive environment.

Furthermore, the organization has revised its **parental leave policy** which came into effect in June 2023. Instead of differentiating between maternity and paternity leave, UNHCR now uses the broader term 'parental leave', distinguishing only between birthing and non-birthing parents. The policy also includes improved conditions for adoptive parents, and extended parental leave benefits to all employees, regardless of their contract type.

Since 2019, UNHCR offers Payment in Lieu of Family Installation at any 'non-family' duty station. This is also extended to cases where residency status is not granted by the host country to eligible dependents due to lack of legal recognition of marriage or union, ensuring equitable treatment for all colleagues.

In June 2022, **UNHCR launched a Pronoun Campaign**, encouraging employees to display their pronouns in their email signatures. This

initiative supports LGBTIQ+ colleagues and contributes to educate all staff about the importance of gender identity and correct pronoun usage.

UNHCR Division of Human Resources has developed action plans on Race Equality and Equity, Gender Parity and Disability Inclusion. These current workforce action plans promote an intersectional and multifaceted approach that considers the needs to engage with and recognize the diversity of all members of UNHCR workforce.

## **4. Conclusion**

Based on the recommendations of the 2021 Roundtable, over the past two years UNHCR continued to enhance its protection response for displaced and stateless individuals with diverse SOGIESC, following a mainstreaming approach that promotes their inclusion and supports their equal and safe access to international protection, services, and solutions across its operations.

As seeking asylum is a human right which sits at the heart of the 1951 Convention on Refugees and at the centre of its work, in multiple forums UNHCR continued to advocate for non-discriminatory access to safe territory, for the right to enjoy asylum, for equal access to rights and inclusive services for individuals fleeing persecution based on real or perceived diverse SOGIESC.

At local and global level, UNHCR's efforts have greatly benefitted from the cooperation with organisations lead by or working for LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced and stateless persons, who have brought their lived experience and their commitment in advancing inclusion, equal access, and non-discrimination.

While this summary highlights examples of progress in several areas of UNHCR's work, continued focus and investment by UNHCR at all levels, in collaboration with other national and international actors and governments, is



required to ensure further advancement and longer-term gains.

In line with some of the key recommendations of the 2021 Roundtable, UNHCR remains committed in investing in training initiatives, to equip staff and partners with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand LGBTIQ+-specific protection risks and needs, as well as to address attitudes and foster an inclusive environment.

UNHCR will also continue its internal reflection on how to better capture SOGIESC data safely and effectively in its registration and identity management policy and system, as well as to explore ways to improve the safe and inclusive

recording of SOGIESC data in other UNHCR systems.

In all aspects of its work on LGBTIQ+, UNHCR remains committed to invest in collaboration with civil society and grassroots organizations who have the required expertise and outreach to meaningfully engage with LGBTIQ+ refugees and stateless persons, facilitate the understanding of their specific challenges, and highlight opportunities for solutions. This collaborative approach not only enhances the effectiveness of UNHCR's interventions but also promotes the empowerment of local organizations, ensuring that their expertise and perspectives are valued and integrated into UNHCR processes, programs, and activities.



*Participation of UNHCR in Pride event (2022)*

**For more information, please contact:**

**The Division of International Protection  
Field Protection Service  
Community-based Protection Unit  
[hqts00@unhcr.org](mailto:hqts00@unhcr.org)**

