REPORT BACK

QUEER FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN KENYA

SUMMARY FINDINGS ON ROUNDTABLE #5 OF THE QUEER FORCED DISPLACEMENT INITIATIVE NAIROBI, KENYA

OCTOBER 15-16, 2025

RAINBOW RAILROAD

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GLOSSARY

ASYLUM SEEKER	An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee.
CITIZEN	A citizen is a person who, by place of birth, nationality of one or both parents, or naturalization is granted full rights and responsibilities as a member of a State.
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRS	Department of Refugee Services: The Kenyan government agency within the Ministry of Interior responsible for administering the Refugees Act 2021, including registration of asylum seekers, refugee status determination, and issuing documentation.
HRD	Human Rights Defender
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labor Organization
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, other identities not specifically listed, such as asexual, pansexual, nonbinary, two-spirit, and more.
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NO LEGAL STATUS	Someone without any legal immigration status (either temporary or permanent) in their country of residence. This is sometimes also referred to as someone who is "undocumented" or "non-status".
NON-REFOULEMENT	The prohibition under international law against returning a person to a country where they face a real risk of persecution, torture, or other serious harm. This principle is enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and is considered a cornerstone of international refugee protection.

GLOSSARY

REFUGEE	A refugee is someone who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of their former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.. The legal definition that applies to a given refugee varies between countries based on the applicable national legal framework, regional declarations and conventions, complementary protection policy frameworks, and international law. The broad definition offered here is derived from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Some refugees are registered by UNHCR under their mandate.
RLO	Refugee Led Organization
RSD	Refugee Status Determination
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
STATELESS PERSON	A person is "stateless" if no State considers them a citizen. States have specific obligations towards their citizens and grant citizens significantly more rights than non-citizens. Since no State recognizes them, stateless persons are deprived of many basic rights and have no State to protect them.
TEMPORARY RESIDENT	A foreign national who is legally authorized to enter and live in a certain country for temporary purposes (work, studies, etc.).
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Note:

This report uses the terms "migrant," "refugee," "asylum seeker," and "forcibly displaced person" to encompass the diverse experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals who are displaced from their homes and forced to migrate elsewhere. These terms are used interchangeably throughout the report, except when referring to the specific legal statuses within Kenya's protection framework. Displaced LGBTQI+ individuals do not often conform to a single category, and many participants themselves used these terms interchangeably when detailing their own experiences navigating a lifetime of forced displacement and migratory experiences as LGBTQI+ persons.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents key findings and recommendations from the Queer Forced Displacement Initiative (QFDI) roundtable consultation held in Nairobi, Kenya in October 2025 — the fifth and final in a series of global convenings to understand the challenges facing LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people, and to gather expert input on the design of a coordinated, multi-stakeholder global network on LGBTQI+ forced displacement. Day 1 of the roundtable brought together LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons, civil society actors, and refugee-led organizations. Day 2 expanded to include diplomatic missions, UN agencies, and international organizations.

The consultation was co-organized by Rainbow Railroad in partnership with the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM), an organization working in Kenya to build the capacity of LGBTQI+ refugee-led organizations, deliver vocational and economic empowerment programs, and sensitize humanitarian stakeholders.

Kenya is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in the world, shaped by protracted regional conflicts, political instability, and climate crises that have driven hundreds of thousands of people across its borders. It is also the only country in the East and broader Horn of Africa region that offers asylum to individuals seeking protection based on SOGIESC identity, drawing LGBTQI+ refugees from Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Yet Kenya itself criminalizes same-sex relations, creating a climate of permission for systemic homophobia, transphobia, violence and human rights abuses against LGBTQI+ people. For LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, these dangers are intensified by the deep vulnerabilities inherent to forced displacement, leaving them at high risk of anti-LGBTQI+ violence and discrimination in urban and camp settings, without any protection from authorities.

Key Challenges facing LGBTQI+ Forcibly Displaced People in Kenya

Participants documented a protection crisis defined by complex, mutually reinforcing failures at all levels of the system. Kenya's criminalization of LGBTQI+ identities is deeply structural, embedded within the legal frameworks, institutions, and systems that govern daily life, which creates an architecture that enables pervasive violence, police persecution, and systematic exclusion from the refugee protection systems that should provide safety. LGBTQI+ asylum seekers reported the targeted denial of registration and deliberate stalling of refugee status determination (RSD) processes, leaving many without legal status for years — in some cases more than a decade. Without documentation, individuals are locked out of formal employment, healthcare, education, and housing, and they are unable to access third-country resettlement, which represents the only viable durable solution for LGBTQI+ refugees who cannot safely integrate in Kenya. The collapse of resettlement pathways — accelerated by the suspension of the United States Refugee Admissions Program in January 2025 — has made an already dire situation considerably more severe. Participants identified camp settings, such as Kakuma Refugee Camp, as sites of concentrated and systematic violence operating with near-total impunity. Concerns were raised that the Kenyan government's Shirika Plan, which promises to transform camps into municipalities and resolve pending asylum claims, lacks mechanisms to address violence or institutional homophobia, and was launched without LGBTQI+ refugee input. Finally, participants emphasized that community-based and refugee-led organizations in Kenya — those best positioned to respond to these crises — are severely under-resourced, excluded from donor funding, and shut out of policy decision-making spaces.

Vision for a Global Network

Despite the magnitude of these challenges, participants arrived at the Kenya roundtable with sharp, specific, and boldly creative proposals for how a global network could help address them. Participants called for a network directed by LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people themselves — with formal leadership positions, rotating board seats, and decision-making authority reserved for people from the

Global South with direct experience of forced displacement. They stressed that the network must embed accountability structures from the outset, with clear workplans, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and a willingness to change course if strategies are not delivering results for the communities they exist to serve.

Participants identified a wide range of strategic activities for the network, from coordinating emergency support and building a centralized data and evidence platform, to pursuing targeted lobbying on resettlement pathways, legal reform, and government accountability in Kenya and beyond. They called for a broad, strategically assembled coalition — including religious leaders, judiciary allies, independent experts, and diplomatic actors — and emphasized that even governments hostile to LGBTQI+ rights must be brought into the conversation, however slow and difficult that engagement may be. Participants also proposed that the network build regional solidarity structures before pursuing a unified global agenda, with country focal points, localized workplans, and proportionate representation, ensuring that the regions facing the most acute crises carry the most weight.

Across all of this, participants were clear that the network must demonstrate its value through concrete, measurable results and must center the leadership and priorities of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people themselves.

The findings from the fifth and final consultation in Kenya reinforce that addressing LGBTQI+ forced displacement requires both national policy reform and sustained international coordination. The meetings offered a glimpse of what the global platform could become: people with direct experience of forced displacement, frontline civil society actors, and institutional decision-makers gathered together as active participants in shaping a shared response. A formalized global network offers an opportunity to strengthen solidarity across regions, elevate the leadership of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people, and translate collective expertise into policy action.

Participants from Day 2 of the roundtable,
Nairobi, Kenya, October 2025

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE KENYA ROUNDTABLE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

The following recommendations emerged from participant testimony regarding urgent reforms needed to address systemic barriers facing LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons in Kenya:

Recommendations for the Government of Kenya

- **Repeal existing laws which criminalize same-sex relations and reject any legislation that would expand the legal persecution of LGBTQI+ persons.** Sections 162, 163, and 165 of the Kenyan Penal Code are the foundational barrier underpinning every protection failure documented in this report. The Family Protection Bill, currently pending before Parliament, would dramatically worsen conditions by expanding criminalization and penalizing anyone who supports LGBTQI+ individuals. Parliament must repeal existing criminalization provisions and reject any legislation that would further restrict the rights of LGBTQI+ persons in Kenya.
- **Enact explicit anti-discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.** Decriminalization alone is insufficient without a corresponding legal framework that affirmatively protects LGBTQI+ persons from discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and access to services. Such protections would bring Kenya into alignment with its own constitutional commitments and its obligations under international human rights law.
- **Repeal or restrict the application of the public morality clause in Section 19(2) of the Refugees Act, 2021 to prevent it from being used to target LGBTQI+ refugees.** This provision permits the expulsion of refugees on grounds of conduct "contrary to public morality" and can be readily weaponized against LGBTQI+ refugees within Kenya's existing legal framework. This clause must be repealed or its application restricted to prevent its improper use against LGBTQI+ refugees.
- **Address the systematic targeting of LGBTQI+ refugees by police and guarantee safe access to justice and protection from violence.** LGBTQI+ refugees cannot report abuses to authorities, because police themselves perpetrate violence through raids, arbitrary detention, extortion, and coercion. The government must implement mandatory SOGIESC training for law enforcement, developed and delivered in partnership with LGBTQI+ refugee community leaders, and create safe, accessible mechanisms for survivors to report abuse.
- **Ensure LGBTQI+ asylum seekers have fair, accessible, and non-discriminatory access to registration and refugee status determination (RSD) procedures.** Participants documented systematic refusal of registration and intentional stalling of RSD for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers, leaving individuals without legal status for years. The Department of Refugee Services (DRS) must cease these discriminatory practices and implement mandatory SOGIESC training for all frontline decision-makers.
- **Revise the Shirika Plan in direct consultation with LGBTQI+ refugee communities to address their distinct protection needs.** The Kenyan government's Shirika Plan, which aims to transform refugee camps into integrated municipalities, makes no mention of LGBTQI+ refugees and does not account for their unique needs. Without targeted measures to address homophobic and transphobic violence, police impunity, and discrimination in employment and services, the plan risks reinforcing the conditions LGBTQI+ refugees face. Revised provisions must include dedicated protections and economic empowerment measures, in active recognition of LGBTQI+ refugee realities.

- **Immediately establish accessible mechanisms to grant movement passes and expedited exemptions to the encampment policy for LGBTQI+ individuals at risk.** Refugee camps are sites of severe, systematic violence against LGBTQI+ refugees — including physical and sexual assault and targeted mob attacks by camp residents. The government must establish streamlined procedures for granting exemptions to the encampment policy and guarantee the right to freedom of movement for all.

For International Actors:

- **Increase resettlement commitments and develop complementary pathways for LGBTQI+ refugees in Kenya.** Resettlement countries must increase intake commitments specifically for LGBTQI+ refugees and prioritize cases that have been stalled for extended periods. Countries must also develop complementary pathways — including private sponsorship, humanitarian visas, and labor mobility programs — to create alternatives to a resettlement system that cannot meet existing needs.
- **Channel funding directly to LGBTQI+ refugee-led organizations and community-based organizations in Kenya and establish mechanisms to hold implementing partners accountable for program delivery.** Direct resources to organizations with demonstrated expertise, using multi-year funding cycles that reflect the realities of protracted, long term displacement. Establish community-led monitoring mechanisms to assess whether programs are delivering effective results for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL NETWORK ON LGBTQI+ FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Drawing from participant input on network design and governance, the following recommendations provide guidance for establishing and sustaining an effective global platform:

Governance and Leadership

- **Establish formal, structured mechanisms to guarantee the decision-making authority of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people at every level of network governance.** Participants recommended dedicated rotating board seats for people with lived experience, term limits to ensure regular renewal, and decision-making positions formally reserved for people with lived expertise. Governance structures must also build in protections for leaders operating in high risk contexts.
- **Prioritize leadership and decision-making authority for LGBTQI+ people and organizations from the Global South, particularly from regions of acute displacement.** The network must not replicate the dynamics of existing global platforms, where well-resourced organizations set agendas while frontline communities hold little power. Representation and decision-making power in the network should be reflective of the regions where displacement crises actually exist.

Membership and Inclusion

- **Design network membership and engagement processes to actively reach and include the most marginalized LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people.** Participants identified specific groups whose voices must be deliberately sought out, including undocumented individuals, people living with HIV, transgender and gender non-conforming persons, and those living in hiding without access to phones or the internet. Practical barriers including language must also be addressed, as the dominance of English and French effectively excludes large portions of the communities the network exists to serve.
- **Develop a strategic multi-stakeholder membership model that maps influence, identifies genuine allies, and adopts a targeted approach to engagement.** The network requires a broad coalition of members, spanning civil society, diplomatic actors, UN agencies, judiciary allies, and religious leaders. In tandem, the network should adopt security protocols to protect vulnerable members including verification, screening and options for anonymous participation.

Strategic Engagement and Advocacy

- **Build the network from regional solidarity structures upward, rather than imposing a global agenda from the top-down.** The network must first build connections and coordination mechanisms at the regional levels, to inform and become the foundation for a coherent global advocacy agenda. The network should begin by conducting a mapping exercise of existing organizations working on LGBTQI+ forced displacement across regions, then identify country focal points, and develop localized workplans. This ensures the global agenda is driven from the ground up by solidarity and clarity of purpose at the regional level.
- **Pursue direct engagement with hostile governments as a long-term strategic priority, while building in rigorous safeguards to protect community members from retaliation.** Governments that actively harm LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people cannot be excluded from a network designed to change the conditions those people face. Engagement must be grounded in preparation, patience, and a clear understanding of where governments have shown willingness to shift. The network must also develop clear protocols to ensure that information shared in the course of engagement cannot be weaponized against vulnerable individuals.
- **Utilize targeted lobbying as a primary advocacy tactic in the network, moving toward collective action that directly pressures decision-makers.** Participants argued that advocacy alone has not produced the change that is needed and called for a shift toward targeted collective lobbying. This means identifying specific decision-makers and pressure points, coordinating sustained pressure across member organizations, and having a presence in policy spaces where decisions affecting LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people are made.

Acountability, Evidence and Sustainability

- **Establish a centralized data collection, research, and community-led monitoring platform to build the evidence base for advocacy and hold implementing partners accountable.** The network should collect and publish data on LGBTQI+ refugee populations and protection outcomes, making visible the realities that decision-makers frequently do not understand. Drawing on the community-led monitoring model developed in the HIV sector, this infrastructure should also function as an accountability mechanism, enabling communities to assess whether funded programs are actually delivering results.
- **Embed accountability structures, clear workplans, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks into the network's design from the outset.** Many existing advocacy efforts fail to produce results because there is no mechanism to track whether commitments are being met. The network must establish measurable outcomes, track progress over time, and maintain a genuine willingness to change course if strategies are not working.
- **Ensure the network's funding model protects its independence through strategic design and diversified resourcing streams.** The network should pursue consortium-based fundraising approaches that appeal to donors' preference for coordinated coalitions, develop creative and fresh narratives when approaching potential funders, and avoid over-reliance on any single funder whose priorities may shift.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

LGBTQI+ FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN KENYA

Kenya is a major refugee-hosting country in East Africa shaped by multiple evolving regional displacement dynamics, including protracted conflicts, political instability in neighbouring countries, and climate-induced humanitarian crises across the region. Within this extremely complex context, forcibly displaced LGBTQI+ people must navigate intersecting systems of criminalization, violence, and institutional discrimination. The following section examines Kenya's refugee protection framework, the legal and social context shaping LGBTQI+ rights and safety, and the barriers within the asylum system that trap LGBTQI+ refugees without documentation or protection.

Kenya's Refugee Landscape and Protection Framework

As of March 31, 2026, Kenya hosted an estimated 841,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, making it the fifth-largest refugee-hosting nation globally.[1] Individuals seeking refuge in Kenya originate predominantly from Somalia (approximately 54-57%) and South Sudan (23-24%), with significant numbers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Burundi.[2] Approximately 80-85% of Kenya's refugee population is concentrated in two large camps administered by the government — the Dadaab refugee complex in Garissa County and Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Turkana County — with the remaining 13-15% living in urban areas, primarily Nairobi.[3]

Kenya has ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol.[4] Domestically, the legal framework for refugee determination, protection and rights is contained within the 2021 Refugees Act and the system is administered by the Department of Refugee Services (DRS).[5] Asylum seekers must register with the DRS within 30 days of entry into Kenya, to receive documentation permitting legal stay, access to basic rights and services, and protection from refoulement.[6] Following registration, asylum seekers undergo Refugee Status Determination (RSD) interviews with DRS officials, to determine eligibility for refugee protection.[7] Those granted refugee status receive expanded rights in Kenya and eligibility for referral to UNHCR for third-country resettlement.[8]

The refugee protection system in Kenya faces severe operational challenges, including a massive backlog that leaves individuals waiting upwards of ten years for interviews and decisions, often while living in conditions of extreme precarity and risk.[9] For many, particularly refugees from Somalia, this protracted displacement has spanned multiple decades, with entire generations born and raised in camps.[10] Kenya's encampment policy further restricts freedom of movement outside camps unless explicitly authorized, and individuals found in violation of the policy are subject to arrest, detention, and prosecution.[11] Individuals residing in camps also face acute food and water insecurity, lack of access to basic services, increased crime and growing tensions between refugee and host communities.[12]

LGBTQI+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Kenya is the only country in the East and broader Horn of Africa region that offers asylum to individuals seeking protection based on SOGIESC identity — a distinction which has positioned Kenya as a potential sanctuary for LGBTQI+ people fleeing conditions of severe persecution and criminalization in neighbouring countries. There is no official population data on the number of LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, and existing figures likely represent significant undercounts. As of January 2024, UNHCR estimated there were 800 refugees in Kenya who applied for protection on the basis of SOGIESC identity, with many individuals located in Kakuma and Dadaab. However rights groups report that the actual number "could be as high as 5,000," particularly given reports of systematic refusal of Kenyan refugee authorities to register claims based on SOGIESC identity. The Ugandan LGBTQI+ refugee population alone surged from approximately 1,000 in 2021 to 4,000 in 2023 following Uganda's passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which imposes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality."

Criminalization and violence

Kenya criminalizes same-sex sexual relations under Sections 162, 163, and 165 of the Penal Code, with penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment.[17] Same-sex marriage is banned under the Kenyan Constitution, and there are no explicit protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.[18] While some recent judicial decisions have affirmed limited rights for LGBTQI+ communities,[19] these incremental gains have been met with intensified backlash — most notably the pending Family Protection Bill, modeled on Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, which proposes the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality" and serious penalties for anyone who supports LGBTQI+ individuals.[20]

This foundation of legal criminalization creates an architecture that enables extreme violence against LGBTQI+ people in Kenya, including widespread incidents of "physical violence, death threats, harassment by state officials, stigma, expulsion from educational institutions, blackmail, extortion and poor access to health care."[21] Political and religious leaders in Kenya have openly stoked this violence, and recent years have seen brutal murders of LGBTQI+ people carried out with impunity.[22]

For LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, these dangers are even more pronounced, as they face both anti-LGBTQI+ violence and the vulnerabilities of forced displacement. Without adequate legal documentation, they are vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, detention, and deportation for being in Kenya "illegally," and regularly face homophobic and xenophobic violence with no recourse to police protection. This is particularly pronounced in camp settings, where LGBTQI+ refugees face extreme violence from fellow refugees and host community members.[23] In Kakuma camp, Amnesty International and the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) documented widespread incidents of physical beatings with sticks, stones, and metal rods; sexual violence including rape and "corrective rape;" arson attacks on shelters; and systematic intimidation. A 2021 survey found that 83% of LGBTI refugees in Kakuma had been physically assaulted and 26% had been sexually assaulted. The same report found systematic police inaction, raising serious concerns about homophobia within state institutions.[24]

Systematic Barriers in the Asylum System

This hostile environment and state sanctioned discrimination extends directly into the refugee protection system. As rights organizations have documented, criminalization "significantly influences the attitudes of the general public, the refugee community, public officials and staff of humanitarian organizations."[25] In 2024, Kenya's former Refugee Commissioner publicly stated that sexual orientation and gender identity "will not be a measure" for granting asylum, explicitly rejecting SOGIESC as grounds for protection in

violation of Kenya's obligations under the Refugee Convention.[26] Moreover, Section 19(2) of the Refugees Act 2021 permits the expulsion of refugees for conduct "contrary to public morality," and this clause has been identified by human rights organizations as a further tool that could be weaponized against LGBTQI+ refugees.[27]

LGBTQI+ refugees report facing pervasive barriers throughout the registration and RSD process, including regular experiences of homophobic and transphobic treatment by DRS officials and interpreters during eligibility interviews. Many are forced to seek asylum on other grounds to avoid the risks of disclosing their SOGIESC identity.[28] Evidence also points to a targeted, systematic practice of denying registration and intentionally stalling LGBTQI+ asylum claims specifically. UNHCR reports that since late 2023, persons presenting claims for protection on the basis of SOGIESC identity, "are being refused registration, though no official suspension has been communicated by the Government," and that since 2021 "such claims have been increasingly kept on hold without a decision being made."[29]

Prolonged Limbo Without Pathways to Safety

Without adequate legal status documentation during this prolonged limbo, asylum seekers cannot access healthcare, formal employment, education, housing, or social services. Critically, in the absence of Kenyan refugee recognition, forcibly displaced LGBTQI+ individuals cannot be referred to UNHCR for third-country resettlement — the only viable durable solution for a population that cannot safely return to countries of origin nor safely integrate within the host community. The January 2025 suspension of the United States Refugee Admissions Program has deepened this crisis, leaving those already approved for resettlement stranded indefinitely.[30]

In March 2025, the Kenyan government launched the Shirika Plan, an 11-year initiative to transform Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps into integrated municipalities, promising work permits, freedom of movement, access to government services, and resolution of long-pending asylum claims. However, the plan makes no mention of LGBTQI+ refugees as a uniquely vulnerable community, and contains no mechanisms to address the violence, police impunity, or institutional homophobia they face. Advocates further fear that discrimination will worsen in open community settings without targeted protections.[31] For LGBTQI+ refugees, the gap between the Shirika Plan's promises and their daily lived realities remains vast.

Kenya's position as the only country in the region offering SOGIESC-based asylum, combined with systematic barriers that block access to that protection, illuminates the immense and complex protection failures faced by LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons globally. Those navigating this landscape hold vital expertise on what concrete steps are needed to dismantle these barriers and build effective systems of protection, making Kenya a critical site for this network convening.

METHODOLOGY

Local Partnership and Coordination

To organize the Kenya roundtable, Rainbow Railroad partnered with ORAM, whose East Africa programming is focused on capacity building for LGBTQI+ refugee-led organizations, delivering vocational and economic empowerment programs, and working to sensitize humanitarian stakeholders across Kenya. ORAM provided critical support throughout the planning and implementation of the consultation, including participant outreach and selection and logistics coordination. ORAM also hired community liaisons whose expertise in the local context was essential in ensuring the right participants were in the room and in shaping the agenda, facilitation approach, and handling of local sensitivities.

The High Commission of Canada in Kenya provided invaluable support in navigating the local landscape and identifying and inviting key government and organizational representatives for Day 2. The Canadian High Commission also generously hosted the Day 2 meeting at their premises in Nairobi, including a reception for all attendees after the event.

Roundtable Structure

The Kenya consultation took place over two days in Nairobi in October 2025. All sessions were conducted in English.

Day 1 was a closed-door session bringing together LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons, civil society representatives, refugee-led organizations, activists, and human rights defenders. Participants were selected in consultation with ORAM and community liaisons, with attention to geographic and demographic diversity, thematic expertise, and direct experience of forced displacement.

Day 2 expanded to include representatives from diplomatic missions, UN agencies, international organizations, and additional civil society actors, bringing institutional decision-makers into direct dialogue with frontline civil society and people with lived experience.

Participant Demographics

Note: Many participants possess multiple, overlapping identities and roles, and the survey allowed participants to select multiple categories under various questions (e.g., a grassroots defender who is also a refugee and a transgender activist). These multi-category responses have been accounted for in the overall counts.

Day 1 convened 22 participants. Of the 21 respondents who completed the post-event survey, participants represented nationalities from Kenya (9), Uganda (7), the Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Ethiopia (1), Rwanda (1), and Somalia (1), with all respondents based in Kenya at the time of the consultation. Gender identities were varied, with the representation of cisgender men (5), cisgender women (5), gender non-conforming participants (5), transgender men (3), a transgender woman (1), as well as intersex (1) and agender (1) individuals. Participants identified as gay (7), queer (4), bisexual (3), lesbian (3), pansexual (3), and heterosexual (2). CSO representatives (10), activists/ human rights defenders (10) made up the core of respondents, with 10 participants reporting direct lived experience of forced displacement — including asylum seekers (7), refugees (3), stateless persons (2), and an individual affected by climate-related displacement (1).

Day 2 expanded the convening to approximately 43 participants in total, including Day 1 attendees. Governments represented included the United Kingdom, Brazil and Canada, with Canadian High Commissioner Joshua Tabah providing opening remarks. UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) were among the international organizations present, alongside several additional community based and civil society organizations and people with lived experience.

Ethical Considerations and Analysis

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the consultation. All surveys were anonymous and participant contributions were not attributed to named individuals in notes or transcriptions. Session recordings were transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify recurring issues and recommendations while protecting participant confidentiality. Local partner organizations received a draft copy of the report for review and feedback prior to finalization.

Limitations

This consultation provided substantive and revealing insights, but cannot claim to represent the full spectrum of LGBTQI+ forced displacement experiences in Kenya.

In particular, a significant structural limitation is the absence of participants currently residing in refugee camps. While people with camp experience were well represented, including former camp residents and service providers with direct experience working in Kakuma camp, no one currently living in a camp attended the consultation. Kenya's encampment policy severely restricts movement in and out of camps, making it difficult both for residents to travel to Nairobi and for outsiders to access camp settings. Given that the majority of refugees in Kenya live in camps, this represents an acknowledged gap, though participants with direct camp experience ensured these perspectives were substantively explored throughout both days.

In addition, sessions were conducted in English, which is not the first language of many participants and may have affected the nuance and depth of some contributions.

We are deeply grateful to all participants who brought their time, expertise, and lived experience to this process. Their insights are the foundation of this report and the compass for what must come next - without their critical voices, none of this work is possible.

Roundtable Day 1: Participant mapping of key challenges facing LGBTQI+ migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya.

PART 1: KEY CHALLENGES FACING DISPLACED LGBTQI+ PERSONS IN KENYA

The following section examines the lived realities of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons in Kenya emerging from participant testimony at the roundtables. Participants described a context defined by Kenya's criminalization of LGBTQI+ identities, systematic exclusion from refugee protection systems, pervasive violence from communities, targeting by police, lack of access to livelihood and essential services and the severe under-resourcing of community based organizations (CBOs). These intersecting challenges stem from deeply embedded structural conditions that LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons must navigate and circumvent in their struggle for safety and survival.

CRIMINALIZATION, EXCLUSION AND KENYA'S HOSTILE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Anti-LGBTQI+ Laws and Policies

Participants universally identified Kenya's hostile, exclusionary legal frameworks and the criminalization of LGBTQI+ identity as the foundational barrier blocking access to meaningful protection, and creating a climate of permission and impunity for rights violations. Many shared that without the legal recognition of LGBTQI+ identity, Kenya will never be a safe place for queer and trans refugees. As one participant explained, "If we had protections for LGBTQ persons in Kenya, then it would be automatic that LGBTQ refugees can benefit from the same. If people are seeking asylum in a country that is criminalizing and does not recognize LGBTQ persons, then [for] refugees, it becomes even more problematic." Another participant stated the exclusion more bluntly: "Clearly you can tell as a country, we do not want queer individuals within our own borders, and we also don't want queer refugees coming in our borders."

Participants expressed deep concern about the Family Protection Bill still under consideration in Kenyan Parliament, which would significantly expand criminalization by defining prohibited sexual activity in detail, limiting freedom of expression, association and privacy rights, and even criminalizing anyone who assists LGBTQI+ individuals. Colonial era anti-buggery laws were cited as creating the blueprint for many of the anti-LGBTQI+ laws and policies enacted across Africa today, with many noting that these legacies continue to strongly shape societal attitudes towards the queer community in Kenya.

It was also stated that in Kenya, many of the laws and policies designed to protect and support refugees actively exclude LGBTQI+ individuals. While the Refugees Act of 2021 contains strong protections in many respects, several participants highlighted that it still contains a clause that permits authorities to expel or refuse admission to refugees on grounds of "morality." It was stressed that this provision can be readily weaponized against any LGBTQI+ person within Kenya's existing legal framework.

Several participants also expressed that the proposed Shirika Plan, while presented by the Kenyan government as a path toward refugee integration in host communities, offers little meaningful protection in the absence of legal frameworks that recognize LGBTQI+ persons. One LGBTQI+ refugee participant aptly captured the fundamental tension: "How do you get integrated in a country that does not accept who you are?"

Participants described how the oppressive legal framework in Kenya operates alongside official denial of the refugee population's very existence. Participants identified "an issue of invisibility" where "government officials clearly say that we do not have [LGBTQI+] refugee persons here in Kenya." Participants emphasized this denial by the government is deliberate, so that authorities may evade responsibility for their legal obligations to LGBTQI+ refugees. Without clear legal protections, LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers are forced to rely on political goodwill to meet protection needs, an inherently unstable strategy which is increasingly untenable in the face of global rightward shifts and anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment.

Participants stressed that addressing these systematic obstacles requires collective action and a steadfast commitment to human rights frameworks that recognize the humanity and existence of all LGBTQI+ persons, not only refugees. Without fundamental legal reform, participants concluded, LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons in Kenya will continue to face insurmountable barriers to safety and dignity.

Systematic Exclusion from Refugee Status Determination

Participants described how the anti-LGBTQI+ legal context permeates the asylum seeking process from the very beginning through to final status determination, amounting to a "targeted denial of key protection services" to LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers specifically. It was stressed that for many, the legal framework not only fails to protect, but actively undermines claims to protection.

From the initial point of contact with the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), participants reported explicit discrimination, with individuals being told by frontline officials that sexual orientation "is not allowed" as grounds for asylum. One person who arrived in 2023 explained that despite using all the proper procedures and repeatedly following up on interviews, they have never received any status documentation, having been told by authorities that

their queerness disqualifies them from protection. Other participants described experiences of being questioned by officials about why they would come to Kenya on SOGIESC grounds when "in our society, we don't consider that as an issue" warranting asylum.

In camp settings such as Kakuma, participants reported that LGBTQI+ individuals are being denied even basic manifest documents and are instead being instructed by DRS authorities to fraudulently alter their grounds for asylum in order to be registered. As one service provider shared: "As long as you present that you're part of the [LGBTQI+] community, either they tell you to change your case or to add other protection issues."

Multiple participants also noted the widespread tactic of intentional stalling of registration and RSD processes for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. As one legal services provider explained, "instead of getting a direct denial, the DRS will stall the registration process and not share any feedback. Sometimes people say that they'd rather be rejected instead of having the stalling here." This pattern of targeted delay was corroborated by several participants, including one who worked as an interpreter during RSD proceedings, and observed that while non-LGBTQI+ Ugandan asylum seekers received refugee status determination, LGBTQI+ Ugandans experienced "intentional non-processing of their cases" with no approvals since 2019. Participants described being trapped in a limbo of non-response and delayed processing that completely blocks access to documentation and basic rights.

Even those who manage to obtain proof of registration often never proceed to full refugee status determination. One legal professional described repeatedly "hitting a wall" when attempting to secure documentation for LGBTQI+ clients, noting that individuals disclosing SOGIESC-based claims may receive proof of registration "and that's it," never advancing to refugee recognition. This systematic obstruction, participants emphasized, stems directly from "deep-seated homophobia and intolerance," exemplified by the former Refugee Commissioner who openly declared he did not want queer individuals entering Kenya. It was shared that such explicit statements of exclusion from those in leadership positions inevitably filters down through institutional structures, translating the hostile legal framework described above into discriminatory implementation on the ground.

Participants also identified profound gaps in knowledge and sensitivity among DRS authorities, emphasizing that registration officers often demonstrate "zero knowledge or zero sensitization when it comes to gender diversity." One participant, a transwoman refugee, described how the first UNHCR official she encountered, "a body that you believe and expect to be having all this knowledge," could not distinguish between transgender and intersex identities.

Participants shared that while asylum seekers wait indefinitely for RSD processes, any temporary status they may have held in Kenya expires, and they become undocumented through no fault of their own. A service provider illustrated this reality through their experiences supporting women refugees from Somalia who arrive in Kenya on tourist visas: "Once they're here, the prolonged process and the bureaucracy with the DRS stalls their stay in Kenya. The DRS is not responding, not giving them appointment dates, not giving them an interview...the women applied for extended visas, but then the visas expired, and they do not know what to do because they're here illegally." Left without the ability to work or access basic services, individuals have little choice but to either "consider another country to go through, or just keep on fighting and pulling with the DRS."

No Durable Solutions: The Resettlement Crisis

Against the backdrop of criminalization and exclusion, LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers do not have any options for safe integration in Kenya, and must rely primarily on third-country resettlement as a durable solution. Yet participants described how resettlement is mired with challenges, constrained by global structural obstacles and marked by organizational gaps that block meaningful access to protection pathways.

Participants identified that resettlement possibilities are fundamentally determined by the policies and quotas of receiving countries, which set strict limits on the number of refugees they will accept annually. These limitations became even more acute following the suspension of the United States Refugee Admissions Program in January 2025. As one participant working with a resettlement-focused organization explained, "that means LGBTQ refugees now spend more time in the country of asylum, both in the camps and even in abandoned locations."

Participants expressed frustration about inadequate communication and follow-up from resettlement organizations, including the UNHCR and Rainbow Railroad. One individual shared the experience of three years of communication with Rainbow Railroad that yielded only generic informational emails with no meaningful response to requests for updates or case progress. The individual noted that accessing support was difficult even with the relative privilege of speaking English and having professional credentials, making clear that for those without such resources, the obstacles might be insurmountable.

Participants shared how the cumulative effect of these failures creates a profound sense of isolation. As one person stated, "Our families disowned us. Then our countries disowned us. And then the service providers, the LGBT community, organizations who support us, we feel like you guys also abandoned us." Trapped indefinitely while awaiting resettlement that may never come, LGBTQI+ asylum seekers struggle to survive in a context that offers no viable alternatives.

VIOLENCE, POLICE PERSECUTION, AND THE FAILURE OF STATE PROTECTION

Homophobic and Transphobic Violence in Host Communities

Pervasive violence and insecurity define daily life for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons across Kenya. The violence stems from what participants described as widespread "ignorance, homophobia and transphobia" in host communities, reinforced by the country's criminalization of LGBTQI+ identities. This hostility manifests in frequent attacks and assaults that participants reported as commonplace, with LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers being targeted specifically due to their visible, intersecting identities. The painful irony of having fled persecution only to face more harm was captured by a service provider who shared that refugees sometimes ask, "Why did I come to Kenya? I'm also facing homophobia here."

Roundtable participants described being targeted for violence and exploitation based on "mere look, mere presentation, dress code," and other visible characteristics which do not conform to local gender norms and expectations. One participant explained their distinct experience as a gender diverse refugee and how being perceived as a woman — regardless of their actual gender identity — exposed them to sexual violence, with perpetrators demanding sexual favors in exchange for essential services or support.

LGBTQI+ refugees in Kenya face the added danger of living in proximity to the same communities and nationals who forced them to flee their countries of origin. One refugee participant recounted being tracked down, brutally attacked and "left for dead" by agents of persecution from his country of Somalia. The participant explained how religious teachings reinforce and legitimize this violence, with religious leaders across faiths using their platforms to condemn LGBTQI+ existence, which in turn fuels family rejection and community hostility.

Most critically, when violence occurs, LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees cannot safely seek help from authorities. After being robbed, one refugee participant shared that "I was scared that if I tell the police I'm an LGBTQ person and I was attacked, they might arrest me. So I never went to report." The participant's fear of police is unfortunately well-founded, with several participants explaining how the combined impact of being undocumented and having a criminalized identity means that reporting violence to police is simply not a realistic or safe option for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons.

Police as Perpetrators: Raids, Extortion, and Arbitrary Detention

Numerous participants shared that LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees are subject to targeted, systematic criminalization and arrest by police. Rather than providing protection from the violence described above, participants described how police in Kenya are themselves perpetrators of violence against LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons. As one participant stated, "We do have a lot of homophobia by law enforcement, and we've had cases of organizations and queer individuals being targeted [by police]."

One manifestation of this targeting is through widespread police raids prevalent across multiple cities, with one service provider participant describing mass arrests of LGBTQI+ people occurring in Mombasa, Tinga, Nairobi, and Kisumu.

Another service provider working with LGBTQI+ refugees shared how this police targeting extends even into private spaces, catching individuals off guard and without time to protect themselves: "We've had our shelters being raided. But by the time [anyone] comes to support, already someone has been violated."

A service provider working in Kenya's coastal region explained how migrants and refugees are extremely susceptible to having encounters with police which lead to arrest and detention, due to vulnerability factors like homelessness, poverty and lack of documentation. The participant described how this cycle operates: "You can imagine if you don't have a home to go to, you are at high risk of being violated by the police. [When you meet] Kenyan police, the first thing they ask you is: 'Where's your ID?' And if you don't have one — that is already a big problem." Another participant shared that at times, even when individuals produce whatever documentation they possess, police demand bribes in exchange for release, which most LGBTQI+ refugees cannot pay. When there is no valid charge justifying arrest, participants described experiences of de facto criminalization, with police using vague offenses such as "disturbing the peace" to function as pretexts for detaining LGBTQI+ individuals.

Other examples shared by participants illustrated how police are well aware of the precarity stemming from migration status, and systematically exploit the vulnerabilities of refugees. As one participant reflected: "There was a time we had a ring of police officers that were specifically targeting queer refugees because they did not have an ID and they just tried to extort them for money and bribes." It was also reported that police leverage refugees' lack of knowledge about their basic rights to further coerce them. One participant explained: "When you are arrested, you're taken to a police cell. The police officer intimidates you because they don't even have the right to arrest [you]. You can't express yourself."

Once in police custody, participants shared how LGBTQI+ refugees often experience prolonged detention, due to lack of phones to call for help, and the absence of personal or community resources to secure release. In detention, LGBTQI+ migrants face additional abuses, with participants reporting practices such as transgender women being placed in male cells. It was shared that individuals living with HIV are not safe to disclose their serostatus in prison and cannot access vital medication, leading to them "being violated more and more."

ECONOMIC AND HOUSING INSECURITY

Documentation Barriers and Exclusion from Formal Employment

Participants all confirmed that finding "opportunities just to sustain yourself" is a major problem affecting LGBTQI+ refugees. Legal work authorization in Kenya depends on first obtaining registered asylum seeker or recognized refugee status. Without this foundational documentation, individuals cannot even apply for work permits and are categorically excluded from formal employment. One LGBTQI+ refugee participant explained the frustration of being blocked at every turn despite having skills and qualifications: "I've got so many opportunities with organizations [but] because I don't have a refugee ID or anything to identify me, nobody can give me a job." Even for those who manage to obtain registration work permits remain notoriously difficult to secure, due to complex processes, onerous requirements and lengthy timelines.

The result for LGBTQI+ migrants and refugees is not only lost income, but unrealized potential, with participants emphasizing that many in the community could contribute meaningfully to the Kenyan economy if given the chance. As one refugee participant stated, "Most of us, we have talents and we can add something [to] the country. But because we don't have legal documents, the only option we usually have is to create our own jobs, and we don't have resources."

Without access to legal work authorization, LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons are pushed into the informal economy, where they face a range of abuses. One service provider shared an example of the risks this creates for refugees who, unable to legally register businesses or enter into binding employment contracts, must rely on the host community for support, which exposes them to exploitation: "Refugees try to use local people to register their businesses, but when the [business] succeeds, the local person

comes and says, 'This is my business.'" It was shared that in such situations, refugees are left without any legal recourse and forced to "start from zero again."

The desperation for income also forces LGBTQI+ individuals into dangerous work environments where they face violence. A refugee participant described their experience after fleeing violence in Kakuma camp and arriving in Nairobi without documentation or employment prospects. Forced to find work in a bar, they were sexually assaulted and became pregnant, which in turn perpetuated the cycle of economic marginalization. The participant captured this reality of being victimized twice, explaining how "I'm now unemployed because of what I've gone through."

Housing Insecurity and Inadequate Economic Empowerment

The conditions described above operate in tandem with acute shelter and housing insecurity in Kenya for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons.

It was noted that there are very few safe spaces for LGBTQI+ refugees in urban settings, and that the shelters which do exist are designed for only emergency, short-term stays rather than long-term housing. One community based service provider emphasized how the shortage of housing options, combined with inadequate economic support, traps LGBTQI+ refugees in cycles of dependence with no pathway to self-sufficiency: "Even when temporary shelters are available, individuals cannot transition out because they lack the economic foundation to secure independent housing. As another service provider corroborated: "the shelters are temporary, and we do not have enough economic empowerment opportunities just to promote self-reliance post the shelter state."

In the private housing market, it was reported that LGBTQI+ refugees face systematic discrimination with participants describing how landlords often refuse to rent to LGBTQI+ individuals outright, or impose arbitrary evictions. One service provider noted that "a landlord can just kick you out if they want, but they just use a flimsy excuse," leaving individuals without stable housing and no mechanism for redress.

Participants noted how xenophobia intersects with LGBTQI+ discrimination to create compounded exclusion from housing. One refugee described being evicted from the shelter where he was staying because he was Somali, and was told, "You look like Al-Shabaab, [and] the neighbors might report it to the police." The participant urged others to remain alive to how different communities may face distinct or elevated risks based on their varying identities.

In this incredibly challenging context, participants emphasized that livelihood and economic empowerment programs are especially vital for the survival of LGBTQI+ refugees, for their ability to meet basic needs and to live with dignity. Yet participants described current programming as scarce and fundamentally inadequate to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons.

Participants identified the time-limited nature of economic and livelihood support as a major deficiency that impedes the ability of forcibly displaced migrants and refugees to establish stable, sustainable futures. As one participant explained, "The funding that is available is only around six months. We need to have an economic empowerment program [that] lasts more than five years." Without programming aimed at building long-term stability, sustenance, and independence, and tackling the root causes of documentation exclusion and discrimination, LGBTQI+ refugees will remain caught in cycles of economic insecurity and housing precarity.

ACCESS TO HEALTH

Exclusion, Discrimination and Gaps in Specialized Care

As with work and housing, access to healthcare is primarily defined by legal status and documentation. LGBTQI+ individuals without documents are routinely turned away from public, government-run health facilities and must rely on expensive private healthcare which most cannot afford. One participant described the devastating consequences of this exclusion after giving birth to a child with serious medical needs: "You can't go anywhere to get medication. The child has to have physiotherapy three times a week and you can't afford it. You can't go to any government hospital. You don't have anywhere to go because you don't belong here, and you don't have anything to start from."

Participants additionally identified systemic discrimination and ignorance among service providers as severely undermining access to health, and the quality and safety of care. Participants explained that this ignorance creates "a bottleneck to service delivery and access," with providers lacking basic awareness of LGBTQI+ health needs and realities.

The obstacles facing transgender and gender-diverse individuals are particularly acute. Accessing gender-affirming care is extremely difficult, with participants reporting a virtual absence of services and severe gaps in provider knowledge. One participant emphasized that "Even when it comes to the health facilities that serve the LGBTQI community in the host country, you find that these services are not there at all." Another participant expressed frustration that organizations claiming to help transgender women access hormone replacement therapy (HRT) "don't even have any endocrinologists that they work with," pointing to an absence of specialized providers with appropriate medical knowledge.

HIV care represents another critical gap. A health service provider working in the coastal regions shared how their organization uses a service delivery model which includes a drop-in centre for HIV care and peer educators working on the ground to identify individuals in need. The participant reported that while they are able to support some LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants through this model, many remain invisible and unreached within the vast geography of the coastal region. Without comprehensive mapping and needs assessments, the participant stressed that it is not possible to develop effective outreach strategies or accurately allocate resources.

Even when organizations offer health services, such as HIV testing, participants noted these are often limited in scope, with one provider explaining they operate only as a lab facility and cannot provide any additional care, so "...when we are not able to offer any more help, the person is left helpless. And [they] can't go to the government facility."

Mental Health Crisis and Emergency Healthcare

Mental health services are similarly absent, despite urgent need. Service providers noted that "a lot of people are struggling in dealing with the trauma that they have undergone," yet one participant reported only being aware of two organizations providing mental health services to refugees, and even these require transportation costs that many cannot afford.

The psychological toll of poor living conditions and protracted displacement is severe, with a participant reporting that "community members have committed suicide because they're hopeless, they're depressed, and others, the majority have resorted to drug and alcohol." Participants identified that, "we need to create more spaces and access to mental health and psychosocial support for LGBTIQ refugees."

Substance use as a coping mechanism creates a particularly cruel cycle of harm for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. As one service provider explained: "You start using drugs. Then, when [the DRS] start processing your claims, they say that you're not qualified because you're using substances. Yet, your circumstances led you to use them just as a way of trying to disengage and to deal with the hostility that exists."

Finally, participants highlighted the complete absence of emergency healthcare for LGBTQI+ individuals who experience violence. As one service provider expressed, "Someone's got an emergency at night, [they need] to get a medical service. You don't have money to help these people. It's been a very big challenge." Another LGBTQI+ refugee participant shared their experience of being beaten unconscious and how, despite the severity of the assault and needing emergency medical care, no support system existed to help. "No one supported us in emergency times," they said. "There is no emergency health care." Fundamentally, participants articulated a clear understanding of how their intersecting identities — LGBTQI+ status, refugee status, race, and economic marginalization — converge to block access to basic survival needs. As one participant observed, these are the impacts of "gender, race and class in the systems that discriminate to criminalize us."

THE MARGINALIZATION OF COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSES

Funding Imbalances and the Bypass of Community-Based Organizations

Participants universally stressed that community-based and refugee-led organizations are the experts on the needs of forcibly displaced LGBTQI+ persons in Kenya. It was noted

that CBOs and RLOs serve as the first point of contact for newly arrived asylum seekers, deliver critical services on the ground, and play an essential gap-filling role in a context where many of the formal protection systems have failed. Yet participants described how these organizations, the backbone of LGBTQI+ refugee support in Kenya, are plagued by severe under-resourcing, making it challenging to deliver services effectively or operate sustainably.

One of the most fundamental problems is that rather than supporting the refugee and community-led organizations doing frontline work, donors channel resources directly to large international organizations, often excluding grassroots groups entirely. One participant observed that, "We usually see international humanitarian organizations doing the work that CBOs are supposed to be doing," leading to a situation where grassroots actors are faced with needs they cannot meet, to the detriment of the communities who desperately need help. A participant working at a CBO shared that "[when] displaced persons come, you find yourself not having the resources to help this person, because a humanitarian or international organization has [the] funds to help these asylum seekers. But [displaced] people don't have access to those humanitarian organizations." This structural bypass widens what participants described as a major "gap between donors and CBOs who are doing the work."

Participants described how other barriers, such as the lack of institutional infrastructure to meet donor requirements, further impedes CBOs and RLOs from accessing resources. As one participant explained, when funding opportunities arise, "grassroots organizations apply, [but] because they don't have certificates or registration or licenses, or leaders [with] legal [status] in Kenya, most times they're not given [funding]."

It was underscored that even when CBOs and RLOs do manage to secure funding, the support is inadequate and unsustainable. Several participants described how funding cycles for housing and economic empowerment programming, often "limited to between six months and a year", are far too short to address the long-term needs created by protracted displacement. Conversely, participants noted that longer-term funding, which may run for five or six years, usually goes to "international organizations or big NGOs that literally have no time. They barely fulfill these projects on the ground, unless they're partnering with local CBOs." Participants expressed frustration at how, even without adequate resources, grassroots organizations are still expected to show up and deliver services that international organizations cannot or will not provide. At times, when larger organizations do engage with CBOs, participants reported they use extractive methods, taking information from communities to write funding proposals without providing feedback or channeling benefits back to those who shared their experiences. Participants situated these failures against the backdrop of massive global funding cuts, including reductions from major donors like the United States. Participants described how the already inadequate resources available to support LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons have shrunk dramatically, with one organizational representative stating that the cuts have "directly affected the support that we're able to offer LGBTQ displaced persons."

Exclusion from Decision-Making and Lack of Meaningful Participation

Participants emphasized that CBO leaders and refugees are often absent from the tables where decisions about their lives are made, reflecting a lack of meaningful substantive inclusion in decision making spaces. Even where LGBTQI+ identity is represented, refugee voices may be absent. One participant noted that "when it comes to decision making, there [may be] an LGBTQ working group that exists within the implementing partners, but refugees are not there." Participants stressed that without refugee voices specifically, the same mistakes will be repeated and underlying, protection needs will never be addressed. As one participant observed, "if someone does not share their experience, that means we're still going to be dealing with the same thing over and over." Another participant raised a critical point about how exclusion from decision-making operates in layered ways, noting how many LGBTQI+ organizations are focused on gay men, trans and intersex communities, while "lesbian, bisexual, [and] gay women are left out," creating a major challenge of "visibility for LBQ women."

Many shared that that the expertise and track record of RLOs and CBOs warrants not just acknowledgment but substantive inclusion in designing relevant and effective responses to the forced displacement crisis. One participant highlighted the immense value and potential held by frontline CBOs and RLOs, explaining how "adding them to such conversations will be able to create durable solutions [and] also interventions."

Coordination Failures and Fragmentation

Participants identified significant coordination and structural gaps among service providers and within civil society that undermine effectiveness of both service delivery and advocacy efforts. Participants observed that often, both community-based and international organizations "are doing the same job, the same things," emphasizing the need for better coordination "so every organization can do a different thing for the LGBT community." It was further identified that some organizations have "overstayed" their relevance and have "forgotten what their missions were", leading to entrenched actors consuming resources, while failing to remain accountable to the communities they serve.

Participants identified how even implementing organizations with good intentions lack the inclusive policies that would enable them to serve the LGBTQI+ refugee community. One participant working in the humanitarian sector explained that many service delivery organizations, "do not have inclusive policies or training when it comes to LGBTI+ persons." As such, the participant shared that when trying to advocate for LGBTQI+ refugees, "you realize you're pushing on your own...I do not have the support of my employer, so my voice is very diminished."

Resource scarcity further contributes to "fractured communities and lack of unity" at precisely the moments when solidarity is most needed. Participants expressed that even though many organizations may have shared goals and values, there is a "schism in advocacy, it becomes conflicting instead of complementing...There's no one voice speaking about the issue... it seems like that we are competing, even though it's the same basket of intolerance and homophobia."

Without sufficient solidarity among organizations working to support LGBTQI+ refugees, efforts to campaign for policy change or highlight abuses become divided and weakened. One participant, an LGBTQI+ refugee, shared the example of a petition that was recently circulated by their organization, and expressed frustration at how the other allied CBOs present in the room failed to sign that petition even though, "we are all here for the same cause." The participant emphasized the need to identify the "partners and agencies who understand what solidarity means. We want radical solidarity - partners who mean what they say."

CONCENTRATED HARM: VIOLENCE IN CAMP AND DURING TRANSIT

While LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons face violence, discrimination, and service gaps throughout Kenya, participants identified refugee camps as sites of concentrated and uniquely intensified harm.

A service provider working in Kakuma identified violence as "the key issue" in the camp context, noting widespread "gender-based violence and continuous persecution and discrimination" alongside "physical assault, rape, and psychological, and emotional abuse." It was reported that LGBTQI+ refugees in camps face mob violence and attacks rooted in "entrenched homophobia" that creates acute danger "especially for gender nonconforming folks and for transgender siblings."

Service providers identified a lack of protection and security, particularly when it comes to police and police engagement as critical problems when addressing LGBTQ+ matters. Participants described several incidents of violence in the camp, where officials were present but did not provide protection. One refugee participant recounted being "attacked at night by other refugees" due to their SOGIESC identity, and being told to leave the camp under threat of further mob violence. The following day, after reporting the incident to police and in the midst of speaking to officials, the participant shared that "a gang of people came and lifted my house" — consisting of a temporary shelter of tarpaulin and iron sheets provided in camps — and that despite witnessing this violation with their own eyes, the police did nothing. The participant expressed the profound sense of fear and helplessness this creates: "It's as if you're in the camp, but you're not safe there. Anyone can do something, even when the officials are there, and nothing will be done."

Participants described how even designated protection areas within camps can expose LGBTQI+ refugees to targeted attacks, as safe spaces become known locations where individuals can be found.

Participants emphasized that the violence experienced in camps must be understood against the trauma of the entire transit and displacement journeys. A service provider oper-

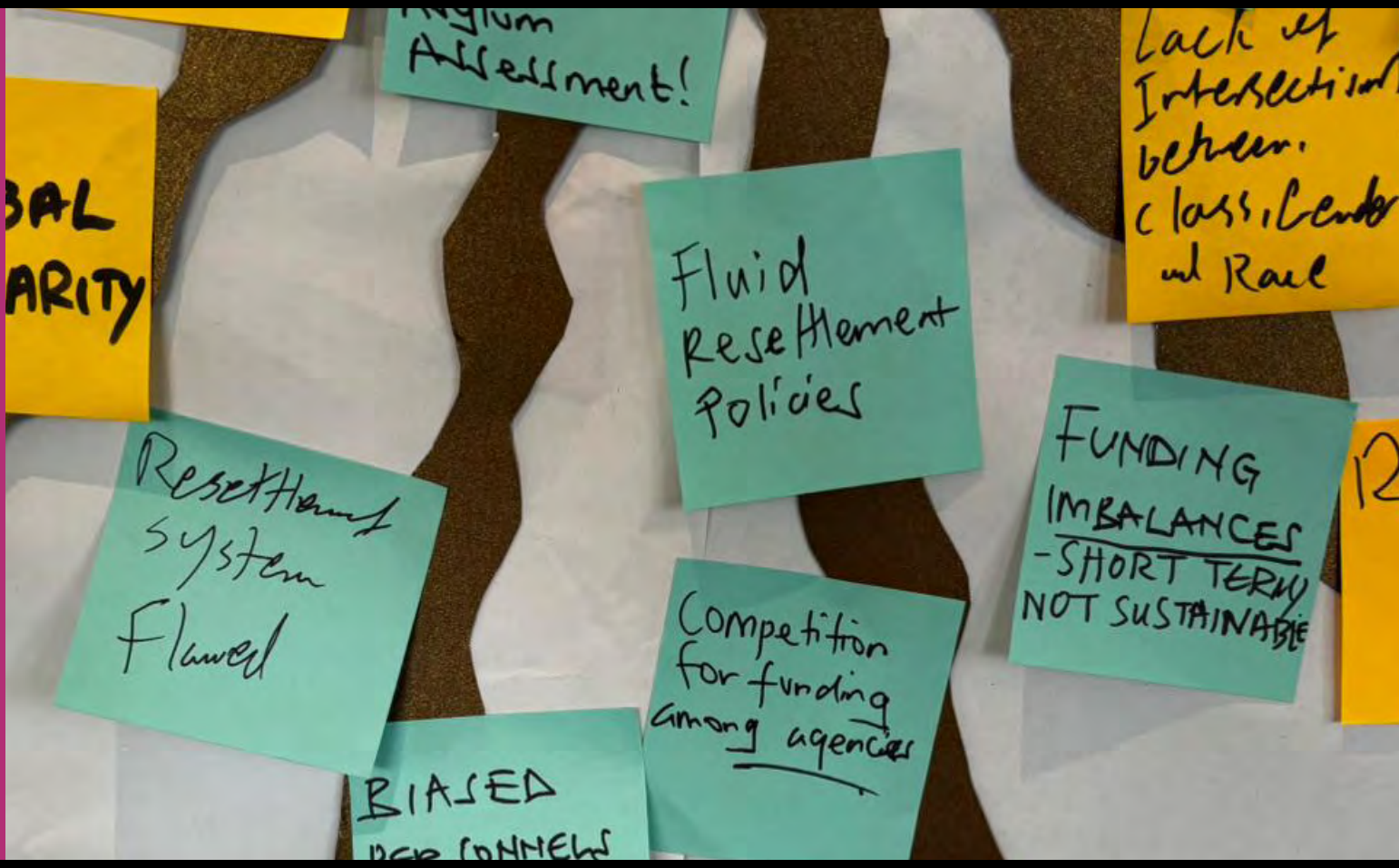
ating in the region bordering Uganda and South Sudan noted that transit journey realities are often ignored despite the severity of violence people experience: "When you interact with some of the LGBT asylum seekers, you will be shocked to hear that from the Busia border [between Uganda and Kenya] to Kakuma, some people take years to get there. And the question is, what do they go through within those years before they get to the refugee camp? People are raped, correctively raped along the transit route." The participant highlighted how this lack of information hampers response efforts: "There's completely no data on how many people are in this country, constantly moving. How many have crossed the border? How many are in the camp?" It was noted that without such mapping, effective interventions cannot take place.

Violence and lack of protection in camps operate alongside severe gaps in essential services. Participants reported "limited to no access to targeted healthcare needs," particularly for gender-affirming care for transgender individuals. These conditions create "poor mental health outcomes" leading to "isolation, depression, and suicide," with psychological support needs remaining largely unmet.

Kenya's encampment policy severely restricts freedom of movement, requiring refugees to reside within the camp and obtain movement passes and exemption documents to travel elsewhere. One service provider stated that for LGBTQI+ refugees, "prolonged encampment is very dangerous," particularly because "Dadab and Kakuma are located in highly homophobic communities," intensifying hostility and risk.

The cumulative psychological toll of violence, service deprivation, and indefinite encampment is immense. A frontline CBO participant described the sense of exhaustion and constant state of vigilance which defines life for LGBTQI+ in camps: "Even [for] those in the refugee camp, they are there, but mentally they are constantly moving. There's a lot of uncertainty of what tomorrow holds.

Roundtable Day 1: Participant mapping of root causes behind LGBTQI+ forced displacement in Kenya.



PART 2: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GLOBAL NETWORK ON LGBTQI+ FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Across two days of consultation, participants put forward sharp, specific, and at times boldly creative ideas for how to address the challenges set out in Part 1, grounded in direct expertise and the belief that change is both necessary and achievable. The following sections capture their recommendations for how a global network on LGBTQI+ forced displacement could be designed, governed, and put to work.

NETWORK PURPOSE AND CORE PRINCIPLES

Solidarity, Complementarity and Collective Action

Participants described the network's primary function as building genuine, action-oriented solidarity, a practical commitment to collective action across borders. One participant put it plainly: "Not taking an action is an action in itself." Participants stressed that LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and refugees must be the ones "dictating issues or positions" within the network. A diplomatic participant reinforced this, emphasizing that LGBTQI+ people's insights and direct experience must be "recognized and used to inform and strengthen collective action" rather than set aside once institutional actors enter the room.

Participants brought expansive ideas about what the network could achieve and identified a range of broad goals which could be concretized through different initiatives. This includes empowering refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in countries of asylum, tackling ignorance among stakeholders, influencing government refugee policies, and working toward the legal protection of LGBTQI+ people. Several participants identified homophobia, transphobia, and ignorance as the root causes of LGBTQI+ forced displacement, and proposed that addressing these root causes should anchor the network's global agenda.

Participants consistently asserted that the network should complement and strengthen existing organizations rather than compete with or duplicate them. They identified the network's primary value as coordination, advocacy, and influence rather than direct program implementation.

Participants proposed that the network should "draw connections across movements" and learn from examples of sustained, community-led mobilization through history and across regions. One participant pointed to feminist organizing, sex worker rights movements, and drug user advocacy networks as models worth learning from and aligning with: "Apart from LGBT displaced movements, there are those that have been thriving like the feminist principles - we can borrow from that, align ourselves with other movements." Another participant highlighted that common ground may be found even among actors who may not typically be aligned, with the example of how LGBT people supporting striking miners in 1980s Thatcher-era England successfully built intersectional solidarity across causes.

Several participants proposed that the network use a diversity of tactics to achieve its goals. One participant proposed using a soft diplomacy approach, with a dedicated task force designed to push agendas strategically and hold actors accountable to the agreements they make. Others stated that advocacy alone has not produced the change that is needed and proposed that, "The network should focus on lobbying more than advocacy as a tactic — collective targeted lobbying that will bring people, even hostile actors maybe, into conversation together."

NETWORK GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

LGBTQI+ Refugee Leadership and Power Sharing

Participants called for the network to establish formal, structured mechanisms to guarantee the presence and decision-making authority of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people at the governance level. One participant recommended that the network establish a board with dedicated seats for people with lived experience — at minimum two rotating positions with term limits of one to two years to ensure regular renewal.

Participants recommended that leadership positions be drawn from LGBTQI+ communities in the Global South rather than defaulting to well-resourced international actors or Global North organizations. One participant noted that leaders from these communities "should be the decision makers because they understand the problem and contexts and have the firsthand experience of challenges." Another participant suggested that at least three or four decision-making positions be formally reserved for LGBTQI+ people from Africa, Asia, and other regions where forced displacement is most acute. Participants identified rotating leadership and term limits as important structural safeguards against any individual or institution consolidating influence over time.

Participants further cautioned that placing people with direct experience of forced displacement in visible leadership roles carries real personal risk, particularly for those leading community-based organizations in repressive environments. Participants stated that the network must build in protections — emotional, physical, and digital — to ensure that people it asks to lead are not exposed to harm.

At its core, it was stressed that although decision-making processes must be consultative across all stakeholder groups, the network must always remain guided by the needs and priorities of those with direct experience of forced displacement — because, as one participant stated, "at the heart of it, LGBT refugees should own the right to decide."

Accountability, Workplans and Follow-Through

A recurring view among participants was that the network must embed accountability structures from the very beginning, with agendas and action points being tied to measurable outcomes and clear follow-through mechanisms. Several participants noted that many existing advocacy efforts and convenings fail to produce real results, stressing that the network must establish workplans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks that can be tracked and reported on over time. One participant explained how goals and agendas mean nothing without a mechanism to track whether they are being met: "If we set up a work plan, like between October and April, how are we going to follow up on what we are agreeing on today? The next time we meet, what have we fulfilled? If it is resettlement, how many people have been resettled? If it is mental health support, how many people have been supported?" For participants, this was ultimately about genuine accountability to the communities the network exists to serve, continuously evaluating whether strategies are actually achieving results, and being willing to change course or stop if they are no longer effective.

NETWORK MEMBERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Including the Most Marginalized

Participants called for membership to be designed with the most marginalized explicitly in mind, rather than assuming that open access produces genuine inclusion. Participants advocated for diverse representation across geographies and LGBTQI+ identities, and identified specific groups whose voices must be actively sought out and accommodated: undocumented queer individuals with no formal documentation, people living with HIV, transgender and gender non-conforming persons, queer parents, and people with disabilities. Several participants stressed that the network must make deliberate efforts to reach those furthest from formal structures — including people without access to phones or internet, and those living in hiding who would never otherwise find their way into these conversations.

Participants also flagged practical access barriers that must be addressed in membership design. One participant noted that most network documentation and communication currently flows only in English or French — a barrier that effectively excludes large portions of the communities the network exists to serve.

A Strategic Approach to Multi-Stakeholder Membership

Participants stressed that engaging different stakeholders must be approached strategically — mapping who holds influence, identifying where points of alignment exist, and leveraging existing relationships to open doors that would otherwise remain closed. One participant argued that building global unity on these issues is fundamentally about "identification of allies, policymakers, and those who can influence country conditions" — which requires "identifying power and understanding power dynamics." While ensuring broad inclusion, participants also cautioned that the network must seek to engage members and partner organizations that have a demonstrated record of following through on stated commitments.

Participants provided examples of how the network might leverage different stakeholder types to platform and communicate grassroots knowledge. Some suggested engaging institutional actors such as the UN Independent Experts on SOGIE, as a mechanism for transmitting frontline evidence directly to seats of power. Another participant highlighted how organizations such as Rainbow Railroad, for example, with established relationships to the Canadian government, can act as intermediaries to facilitate connections between centers of power and smaller CBOs. One participant also identified the judiciary as a strategic entry point, arguing for identifying and empowering key allies within legal institutions as a means to create pressure from within for systemic reform.

Participants further stressed that when determining stakeholder engagement strategy, the network must look beyond immediate protection responses and ask how it can address the underlying drivers of LGBTQI+ forced displacement itself, including the narratives and belief systems that sustain persecution over generations. For many partici-

pants this includes confronting the role of religion directly. Several raised that anti-rights and anti-LGBTQI+ agendas are in many cases directly funded by religious institutions and that addressing this major challenge requires direct engagement with religious leaders and communities. As one LGBTQI+ refugee participant stated: "[Religion] is one of the root causes of the hate against LGBTQ people. We should at least allocate some funds for those sheikhs who bridge tolerance and coexistence among people who have different sexual orientations."

Engaging Hostile Governments and Managing the Risks

When it comes to the challenging question of engaging states like Kenya within the network, one participant framed the central issue: "A big question we have — if this is a multi-stakeholder network and we are inviting governments, what about hostile governments? What place do they have here? How do we bring hostile governments into this conversation? Because we have to change how they are approaching these things as well. But we also need to force them into this conversation somehow."

Participants emphasized that productive government engagement begins with rigorous preparation and a comprehensive understanding of how policies are made, where governments have shown willingness to shift, and what approaches are likely to find traction in specific contexts. As shared by one refugee participant: "Governments have the key to systemic issues. [But] the situation differs from one country to another. [We must ask] what are the issues they can address and why are they reluctant about some? Unless we have the courage to engage with them, we won't be able to understand."

Several participants argued that direct engagement with hostile actors is also fundamentally about breaking down ignorance and forcing officials to confront and challenge their long held, dehumanizing and discriminatory views. As one participant asked: "How do we bring governments into this conversation and put them face to face with a human and then realize — oh wait, gay people are not all of these things that I thought they were?"

Participants also understood that in practice, pushing for change of this magnitude is often slow, incremental, and even discouraging before it produces results. Using the example of sensitizing police and immigration officials on SOGIESC issues, one participant from a CBO shared how addressing structural ignorance requires persistence, patience and a long term view: "You're being very persuasive in conversations on and on and on. It's very slow, it's negative at first, but that type of strategy is very important."

At the same time, participants were clear that any engagement of hostile actors must actively account for the risks involved, and protect vulnerable individuals from harm or retaliation. As one LGBTQI+ participant from a refugee-led organization shared, "I know for a fact, the more we sensitize stakeholders, you give them a clear understanding of the issues, there is a risk of them using that information against you."

Participants warned that if the network attracts the attention of an aggressive homophobic regime, the work itself and the people behind it become targets. Several participants put forward concrete safeguards to mitigate these risks, including clear membership criteria and verifying member credibility by tracking their internet footprint. Participants also called for options for anonymous or informal participation that allow people in high-risk contexts to engage without placing themselves in danger.

REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COORDINATION

Regional Solidarity as Foundational

Participants noted that when it comes to LGBTQI+ forced displacement, "every country has different needs" and that any global structure must allow for localization to address specific issues in each context. The starting point, as one participant proposed, must be regional: "It needs to come from regional solidarity and agendas, and then after building this we can build a global agenda."

Participants put forward substantive proposals for how to develop these "structures of solidarity" in practice. The first step, it was suggested, would be a comprehensive mapping of efforts and activities already taking place at country and regional levels — establishing what exists, who is doing what, and where gaps are concentrated. From this foundation, one participant proposed identifying key country focal points who "understand the country well" and can act as the network representative, coordinating with the central platform, developing localized workplans, and providing regular updates on conditions and priorities in their context.

On representation, participants argued that decision-making weight within the network should reflect where displacement crises actually exist. One participant proposed a concrete model: a region like Africa, where forced displacement of LGBTQI+ people is most acute, might have one hundred representatives while North America might have ten, with each region casting a single collective vote.

Participants also proposed that from this regional foundation, the network could develop coordinated global campaigns on issues that cut across contexts. Expanding complementary pathways for LGBTQI+ refugees was cited as one such issue. One participant offered a concrete model for how regional-to-global collaboration could be actualized, borrowing from the convening model of climate justice summits which bring together stakeholders from all levels, from frontline service providers to heads of government, to deliberate collectively, commit to common standards, and map implementation regionally. The participant noted that this approach allows the network to first identify and then build on existing progress: "We can say Kenya is trying and then we can start scaling up [globally], sharing best practices that are designed, strategic and scaled up."

STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES OF THE NETWORK

Participants proposed three core strategic functions for the network: direct coordination and support for individuals in crisis, evidence-building and community monitoring to ground advocacy efforts, and targeted policy engagement to drive systemic change in Kenya and regionally.

I. Coordination and Direct Support

Participants proposed that the network could play a practical coordinating role to fill current gaps in support for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people in crisis. One participant described this as a "one-stop system for service provision" where emergency cases could be flagged and documented through a single platform. This would enable information about support needs to flow directly to relevant organizations and facilitate cross-border coordination of legal consultation, service referrals, and practical assistance.

The problem of stalled exit permits for refugees who have been accepted for resettlement was raised as an under-addressed barrier in Kenya with one participant noting that people can wait for two years or more without receiving an exit permit, creating "a big blockage" in their ability to move toward safety. The participant suggested that the network develop mechanisms to follow up on these cases.

II. Evidence, Data Community Monitoring

Participants recommended the establishment of a centralized data collection mechanism to make LGBTQI+ displacement visible. One participant proposed that a role for the network should be to "make visible more data and more research on the particular issues of [the] LGBT community," and to "build solidarity around data and lived realities." Specific proposals included "a global website, showing statistics and challenges" or a "global dashboard, where we collect stories [and] report what is happening." It was noted that organizations implementing programs on the ground do collect valuable data, but without a dedicated platform to record this information, it cannot be made available for broader advocacy efforts. Another participant observed that often, organizations "don't report [data], we assume it won't make a change. That needs to be tackled globally."

Participants agreed that access to reliable data and robust evidence is the backbone of successful advocacy strategies. In situations where vulnerable individuals may be challenging systemic issues or institutional actors in positions of power, participants stressed that "you need strong evidence" to mitigate risks and credibly substantiate claims: "After collecting data you make [the] analysis. People don't trash data! That is evidence based advocacy." It was recommended that the network become "more research centered" and create "partnerships for research" and "research hubs" focused on "advocacy capacity building." One participant suggested that the network capitalize on existing research to develop an actionable agenda: "A lot has been done. Let's look at the recommendations in reports, let's turn them into action." Another participant proposed that the network could leverage global human rights committees and existing research on freedom of movement and host country security to push back against abuses and structural dangers caused by encampment.

Participants proposed that this data infrastructure could also function as a community-level accountability mechanism to assess whether funded programs are actually delivering results for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people. As shared by one participant, "We have a lot of implementing partners who are doing nothing. [The] network could

do the job of assessing the effectiveness and impact of implementation of programs." Drawing on the community-led monitoring (CLM) model developed in the HIV sector, one service provider described a vision where the platform can serve as a direct collector of community level evidence to ground strategic and sustained advocacy efforts: "I am looking at a point where the network comes to the ground, goes to Kakuma, gets real feedback, hears different stories, which is documented. You take that to elected officials [and say] this is what is happening here." The participant noted that the driving goal of this kind of monitoring is accountability: "The end product of CLM is usually to bring in people who have the power - then the governments are held responsible. If they are doing something that is substandard, then they are put in the spotlight."

It was emphasized that data collection is therefore both the foundation of the network's advocacy work and the mechanism through which that advocacy can be sustained and defended over time.

III. Advocacy and Policy Engagement

Across both days of the consultation, participants brought specific proposals for what the network must do to improve conditions for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people in Kenya. They identified the laws, institutions, and decision-makers that need to be engaged, and proposed concrete tactics for doing so.

In the Kenyan context, participants identified the government's contradictory, opaque stance towards LGBTQI+ refugees as a major impediment to protection, which permits the government to shirk responsibility for legal obligations and constitutionally enshrined rights afforded to all refugees. One LGBTQI+ refugee participant observed that the government's silence on this issue is deliberate — a signal that "there is something that the Kenyan government fears," suggesting that the government understands that taking an explicit public position would require it to follow through on obligations it has so far avoided. One LGBTQI+ refugee participant stressed that to hold the state accountable to its obligations, the network should "push the Government of Kenya to explicitly take a position on queer refugees, to tell people to either go away or [that] they can stay. Why let in more when you can't handle what you have?" A representative from UNHCR agreed that forcing the government to take official public positions on key issues is an important tactic to close this implementation gap. Using the example of decision-makers in camp settings who reject LGBTQI+ claims, it was noted that forcing the Kenyan government to take an explicit public stance would limit the discretion of individual actors to act on personal bias and would create clear standards against which implementation can be measured and accountability demanded.

In the international sphere, participants recommended that the network facilitate greater LGBTQI+ refugee participation in key political and policy spaces such as the East African Community, the Global Refugee Forum and other UN spaces, as a way of ensuring direct community voice in decision making.

Participants also outlined several concrete policy reforms the network could pursue to improve conditions for LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced people in Kenya and create the foundation for a regional network agenda.

To address systemic obstacles to documentation and RSD procedures, participants proposed that the network advocate for the expansion of DRS registration centers, push for online digital accessibility of DRS processes, and hold DRS accountable to its mandate to protect all asylum seekers, including LGBTQI+ persons. Participants also recommended that the network support with targeted, SOGIESC sensitization training for frontline actors, noting that: "....the people who make the decision are immigration officers. So, if you can get to these immigration officers and they're well trained, I think that could help the process."

To address harms experienced by LGBTQI+ individuals in camp settings, participants called for the immediate creation of well-resourced committees to grant exemptions to the encampment policy, and proposed that strategic litigation be used to challenge policies that violate freedom of movement and human dignity.

On health and services, participants proposed that the network's agenda could include support for refugee-led shelters to improve safety, transit centers for vulnerable new arrivals, and engagement with private sector and corporate social responsibility programs to establish inclusive service access points.

NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCING

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NETWORK SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCING

Participants recognized the network's resourcing strategy must be designed to protect its independence and long-term viability, and cautioned against over-reliance on any single funder whose priorities may shift.

On donor strategies, several participants stressed the importance of joint fundraising and consortium-based approaches, noting that donors tend to prefer funding coordinated coalitions over individual organizations. Participants also suggested using fresh and creative storytelling when approaching potential funders, sharing that: "It's better to change narratives, to make a different narrative than what [donors are] used to."

Participants identified institutional memory as another dimension of sustainability, noting that high turnover within organizations means that knowledge, relationships, and institutional learning are frequently lost. One diplomatic participant noted that this is particularly the case for foreign offices which have rotational staff, stating that "a structured network is good for institutional memory."

Finally, participants raised a distinctive proposition: that the network should not assume it needs to exist indefinitely, remaining attuned to whether it is still needed and effective, and being willing to wind down if it is no longer serving its purpose. This willingness to evaluate and if necessary conclude the network's work was framed as a mark of genuine accountability to the communities it exists to serve.

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CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The strategic vision articulated by participants throughout this consultation reflects both the depth of the crisis facing LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons in Kenya and the clarity with which communities understand what must change. Participants identified concrete pathways forward: coordinated emergency support systems, evidence-driven advocacy grounded in community monitoring, and targeted policy engagement to dismantle the legal and institutional barriers that trap people in cycles of violence and exclusion. These proposals are actionable, specific, and driven by the expertise of those navigating these systems daily.

Realizing this vision requires centering refugee leadership, adequately resourcing the community-based organizations doing frontline work, and maintaining accountability to those abandoned by protection systems designed to serve them. As participants made clear, this network must operate differently—rejecting extractive models and ensuring that solidarity translates into sustained support. LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons in Kenya cannot wait for incremental change while facing daily threats to survival. The path forward demands immediate action to transform these recommendations into protection that is real, accessible, and grounded in the realities of those who can no longer afford to wait.

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