# Addressing the amplified risks of pandemic times for LGBTQI refugees



Unceded Coast Salish territories: Skwxwú7mesh,Úxwumixw and xwməθkwəyəm Nations Vancouver|Surrey|Burnaby

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# **Evolving Language of Human Diversity**



### LGBTQ2 Refugee Resettlement Journey Map, May 25th 2018

### **Seven Key Issues**



Implement SOGIE training as a system-wide standard for resettlement.



Increase and strengthen partnerships with LGBTQ2 civil society organizations in Canada to facilitate the settlement of LGBTQ2 refugees.



Provide mental health support across the resettlement continuum to support LGBTQ2 refugees, recognizing the intersectionality of trauma that LGBTQ2 refugees have experienced.



Ensure the visibility of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) policies on non-discrimination and confidentiality.



Secure permanent funding for the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Pilot, making it a permanently funded, privately sponsored LGBTQ2 refugee program.



Develop jointly, via the IRCC-Coalition, a crisis response plan for LGBTO2 refugees.



Collaborate to reduce barriers to resettlement and ensure comprehensive resettlement ID and destining.

#### LGBTQ2 Resettlement Journey Map

- The LGBTQ2 Journey Map exercise represents the resettlement journey of three different LGBTQ2 refugees; a gay male, a lesbian woman and a transgender woman. It documents their journey from leaving their country of origin to their final arrival and settlement in Canada.
- The aim of this work was to highlight barriers specific to LGBTQ2 refugees in their resettlement process and identify key issues that could be further developed to improve the resettlement process for this vulnerable population.
- Participants in the process included Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Privy Council Office Secretariat, Global Affairs Canada, United Nations Refugee Agency and The Coalition; that is working on LGBTQ2 refugee protection.

Immigration, Réfugiés



**Exiting country** of origin



Seeking protection



COUNTRY OF ASYLUM **Processing** resettlement



Preparing to leave for Canada



Initial arrival -0 to 5 days



integration

#### What are they doing?

- Preparing to leave
- Collecting personal items
- Avoiding targeted violence and capture
- Finding safety
- Registering asylum claim with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- Identifying source of funds to sustain themselves
- Collecting identification (ID) Preparing to retell their story and relive trauma
- Finding information on what to expect before attending interview and screening
- Attending pre-departure workshops Communicating with sponsorship group in Canada
- Obtaining exit visas
- For privately sponsored refugees, meeting sponsors for first time
- Getting appropriate clothing
- Consolidating whatever financial resources they have
- Finding affordable, safe housing Identifying and accessing appropriate

medical care in Canada

 Connecting with Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and 2-spirit (LGBTQ2) community

#### Barrier hindering the refugee at each stage

- Isolation and threats to personal safety from family and community
- Persecution from police
- Limited access for help to leave
- Access to Internet limited, public and unsafe
- Inability to leave country of origin, due to gender, age, exit permissions
- Children cannot leave with mother without father's consent

> Privately sponsored lesbian woman

Screening at border is highly risky

- Invisibility of information about migration pathways for LGBTQ2 refugees
- Acute personal safety concerns and challenges safely accessing housing, work and Internet Lack of mental health support
- **Disclosure** required to get information
- Family reunifications may not recognize unmarried partner or married wife

■ Privately sponsored gay man

- Homophobic and transphobic migration officers, translators and doctors
- Distrust of migration officers, translators and doctors
- Lack of information about medical screening process and purpose
- Reveal of HIV status during medical exam and no counselling or care
- Difficulty obtaining documents for children without father's consent

◆ Urgent protected person: transgender woman

 Doctors' lack of experience with trans individuals

- Discrimination from locally engaged officials
- Danger in government buildings and at road checks
- Prejudice from authorities granting exit visas
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) orientation not mentioning LGBTO2 resources
- Legal and financial barriers
- Risky travelling with gender-diverse clothing or unaligned ID

- Reception centres hostile to and unprepared for LGBTO2 refugees
- Homophobic and transphobic newcomers in reception centres
- Discomfort with telling translators from same cultural community that they are LGBTQ2
- Shared accommodation with homophobic or transphobic individuals
- ► Hostile language classes
- Lack of mental health support
- Few LGBTQ2-positive settlement spaces
- Psychological impacts of LGBTQ2 persecution interfering with trust and relationship building
- Restrictive family reunification rules
- Settlement reporting boxes work only for heterosexual and cisgender people
- ◆ ID cannot be changed to match gender for 12 months

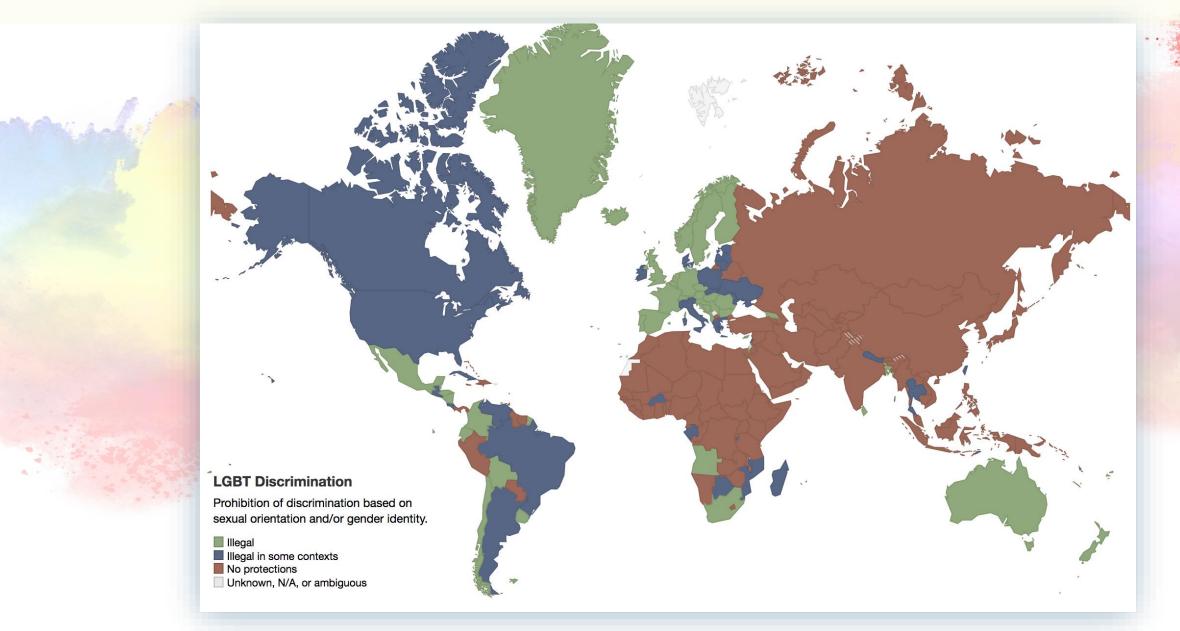
#### Opportunity to overcome the barrier (by Key Issue)

- 5 Network of safe houses for those fleeing violence
- Information on country of asylum conditions and resources for LGBTQ2 refugees
- Increase outreach and awareness regarding opportunities for protection and resettlement
- Enable referrals to safe houses. mental health support and non-governmental organization
- Simplify the application process
- Allow for a safe word to enable ID of LGBTQ2 individuals
- Ensure sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) training for all individuals who work in resettlement (Government of Canada and others)
- 3 Make non-discrimination and respect policies visible
- Ensure SOGIE training for all individuals who work in resettlement (Government of Canada and other)
- Facilitate exit permits better
- Make transgender-friendly travel guides from IOM available
- Provide LGBTQ2-supportive housing options
- Ensure SOGIE training for settlement organizations
- Ensure service provider organizations recruit and train LGBTQ2-friendly interpreters
- Affordable and safe housing
- LGBTQ2-friendly language learning opportunities
- Community-based mental health support that is culturally appropriate and LGBTQ2-friendly

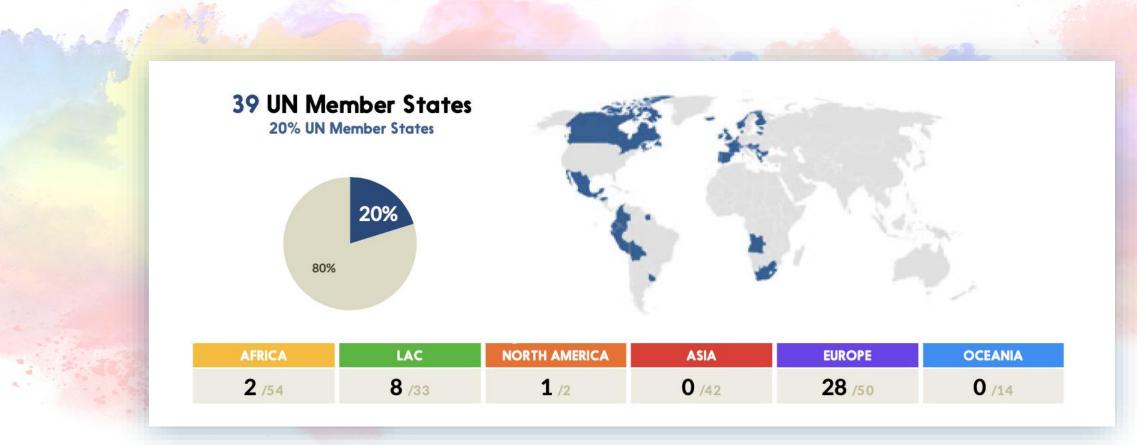




# **Uneven Human Rights Protections**



### **Uneven Human Rights Protections**



Protection against inciting hate

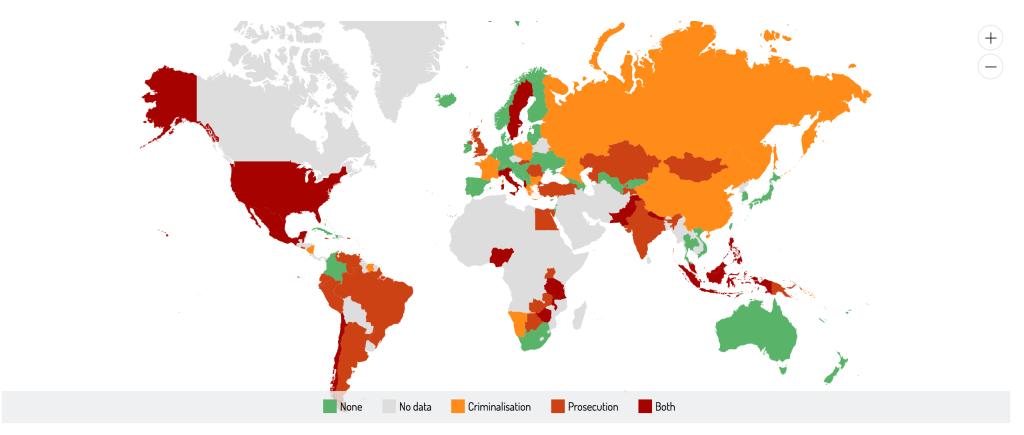
### **Persecution against SOGIESC Diversity**



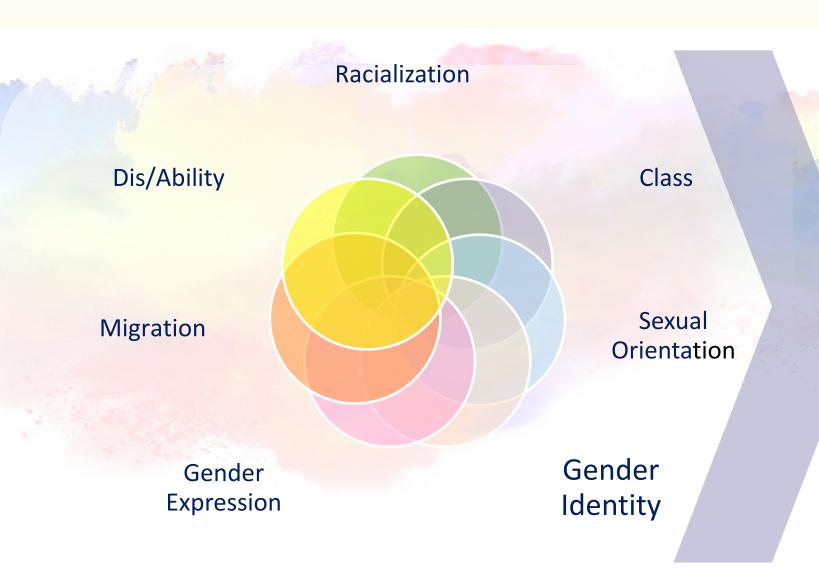
At least 68 countries criminalize same-sex relationships

### **Persecution against SOGIESC Diversity**

At least 57 countries criminalize gender diversity



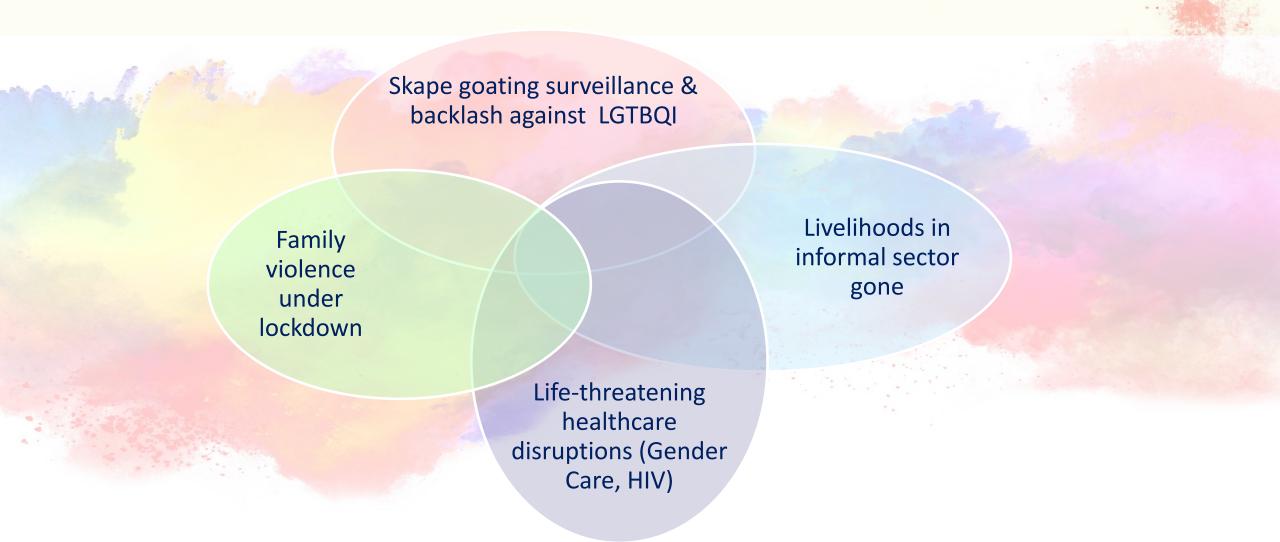
# Implications of Intersectionality



Compound to amplify marginalization

Interact to create **distinct** risks

# International Impacts of Pandemic for LGBTQI



https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/what-we-do/report-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-displaced-lgbtqi-persons outrightinternational.org/content/vulnerability-amplified-impact-covid-19-pandemic-lgbtiq-people

# **Principles & Learnings**

Refugee travel is Essential travel

G/local networks among LGBTQI Civil Society Orgs are critical connectors

COVID safe arrivals are underway, with resources & collaboration-What happens to resources in March 2021?

# **Pandemic Impacts on LGBTQI Settlement**

Intensified stigma & threats in streets & workplaces

Domestic violence under social isolation

Essential but precarious & at-risk work

LGBTQI specific Digital inequities

# **Principles & Learnings**

Don't aim for Normal – Opportunity to renew with equity

Lived Expertise informed (re)design

Consider Systemic, Indirect & Intersectional impacts

Collaborations flourish with reduced funding barriers

### Resources

### Pandemic Impacts & Recovery

- outrightinternational.org/content/vulnerability-amplified-impact-covid-19-pandemic-lgbtiq-people
- www.rainbowrailroad.org/what-we-do/report-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-displaced-lgbtqi-persons
- ASPIRE Guidelines of the UN Independent Expert on protection from SOGI violence and discrimination www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/Index.aspx

### **Human Rights Status of SOGIESC Diversity**

- UN Free and Equal www.unfe.org
- ILGA report -/ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws
- Yogyakarta +10 -yogyakartaprinciples.org/principles-en/yp10/
- transrespect.org



Immigration, Refugees

and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés

et Citoyenneté Canada

Femmes et Égalité

des genres Canada

Women and Gender

**Equality Canada** 

Thank you to

SFU Community Engagement Initiative

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