



# RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

Insights from OutRight's COVID-19  
Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund 2021

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**OUTRIGHT**  
ACTION INTERNATIONAL



A recipient of groceries supplied by Queer Youth Uganda.

# Introduction

In recent months, news increasingly highlights growing COVID-19 vaccine access in many places, lifting of pandemic-related restrictions, and a return to some semblance of normalcy. However, vaccine distribution is highly inequitable. As such, LGBTIQ people continue to face a crisis within a crisis, posing the biggest challenge for our communities around the world at this moment.

This briefing covers insights from the second call for applications to OutRight's COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund issued in April 2021.

While a pandemic affects everyone, vulnerable communities feel its impact more strongly than the general population. The marginalization LGBTIQ people experience on a day-to-day basis was amplified during the pandemic. In May 2020 OutRight released the report "[Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTIQ People](#)", and it showed a bleak picture. Due to overrepresentation in informal sector jobs, LGBTIQ people experienced a devastation of livelihoods. Loss of jobs resulted in a loss of homes and often forced people to return to unsupportive family homes where, in turn, LGBTIQ people faced rising rates of domestic and family violence. Moreover, LGBTIQ communities experienced amplified challenges accessing healthcare and were scapegoated for the COVID-19 pandemic, further increasing already prevalent levels of LGBTIQ-phobia around the world.

Compounding the mounting marginalization even further is the fact that humanitarian responses too often exclude LGBTIQ people by using narrow definitions of family, binary definitions of gender, unsafe locations, or biased staff for emergency interventions. In Sri Lanka, for example, food aid was distributed in police stations, which are not safe locations for LGBTIQ people in a country which still criminalizes same-sex relations. While in the Philippines support was handed out to families, and several lesbian couples told OutRight they were turned away for not constituting a "family".

Well over a year into the pandemic, as news reports of recovery, vaccination efforts and a return to some semblance of normalcy, the same is not true for LGBTIQ people. Or for much of the developing

world. While vaccines have become widely available across North America, Europe and Latin America, the same is not true for the majority of the world. This [vaccine tracker](#) shows less than five doses administered per 100 people across Africa, under 10 in parts of the Middle East and South East Asia.

What does this mean? It means that most people in the world have not reached the end of the pandemic. And, as the Global South has more of the world's population and more of the world's laws criminalizing same-sex relations, the majority of LGBTIQ people in the world continue to be in a crisis within a crisis, feeling amplified effects.

Experience from other crisis situations also shows that when recovery efforts do take on more speed, LGBTIQ people will not be among the first to feel the effects - they will be among the last, as we are seeing this time too in countries in which recovery efforts are well under way.

**One applicant highlighted a dramatic loss of funding as a result of which they are on the brink of shutting several community centers around the country providing crucial services to the community.**



*United and Strong volunteers put together bags of food and provisions for LGBTIQ people in St Lucia.*

# A Deepening Need

As OutRight identified the amplified effects LGBTIQ people were facing as a result of the pandemic, in April 2020 we launched the [COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund](#). The Fund aimed to offer emergency support to LGBTIQ organizations serving LGBTIQ people impacted by COVID-19. Within a month of opening the Fund for applications, over 1,500 appeals for help from 131 countries were received – together requesting more than USD \$12 million in support.

Due to continued fundraising and generous donations to the Fund, and continuing calls for help from LGBTIQ communities, in April 2021 OutRight launched a new call for applications. This time we received the same number of applications – 1500, from 115 countries. But the total need had drastically increased, totaling \$18 million, indicating a deepening need and highlighting that LGBTIQ people are not being reached by recovery efforts.

The call for proposals encouraged projects with a focus on recovery which is reflected in the applications for income generating projects and job training but many proposals still focused on immediate needs for food and shelter.

## 2020-2021 TOTAL APPLICATIONS

Total number of applications received in 2020-2021  
**3,020**  
from  
**131**  
countries

## APRIL 2021 APPLICATIONS TO THE FUND

**1,500**  
Applications received

**1,406**  
Eligible applications

**18M USD**  
Total amount requested

**115**  
Countries represented

### LANGUAGES

**9** Arabic  
**21** Russian  
**28** Bahasa  
**84** Portuguese  
**155** French  
**189** Spanish  
**909** English

Applications received in the second call in April 2021, can be categorized as follows:

### **11% ask for funds to support income generation and job training for LGBTIQ people.**

OutRight encouraged applications in this category to facilitate and strengthen recovery efforts. There were no applications of this nature last year, reflecting the continued devastation of livelihoods and exclusion from relief and rebuilding efforts of LGBTIQ people. This, in turn, is causing LGBTIQ organizations to have to step in and come up with new strategies to support their communities in being able to find work, generate income, or gain new training to access new job opportunities.

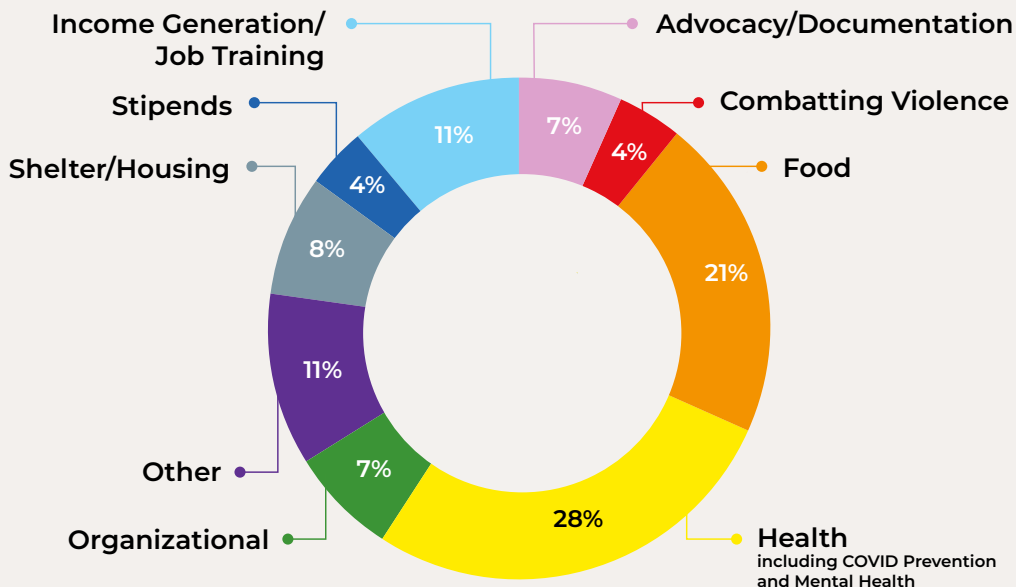
### **21% requested funds for food.**

Although less than the 55% requested in food in the first call for applications, this is a high number, considering how long the pandemic has gone on for. If over 20% of applications highlighted the need for food at this stage, it points to LGBTIQ people being left-out of recovery and relief efforts.

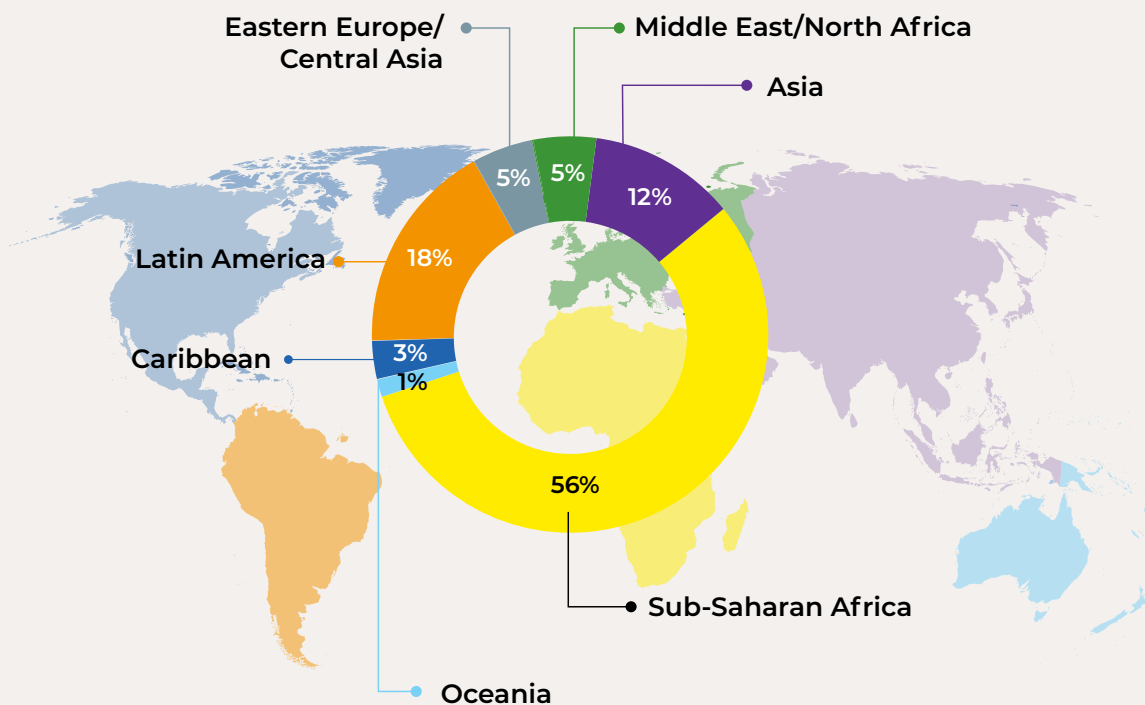
### **28% of requests relate to healthcare, compared to 20% last year.**

This reflects continuing challenges in accessing healthcare for LGBTIQ people, and the growing implications of this restricted access. In some ways this is unsurprising, as accessing LGBTIQ-friendly and inclusive healthcare is challenging even in the absence of a pandemic, even in places with strong legal and policy protections for LGBTIQ people. However, in a pandemic, when access has been restricted to essential only services in many parts of the world, the continued barriers for crucial, life-saving access, including HIV medication and gender affirming treatment for trans and non-binary people, is especially concerning.

## Applications by Theme



## Applications by Region



# Review Process

The Fund was open for applications to both registered and non-registered organizations serving LGBTIQ populations (whether broadly, or specifically targeting a subset) in all regions of the world except Canada, the European Economic Area, Switzerland, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

The review process for assessing applications received was managed by OutRight's Senior Advisor for Global Advocacy, Paul Jansen, who has spent over a decade as a grant-maker.

To ensure objectivity, due diligence and speed, we created a three-tier review process.



Over 450 volunteer reviewers were trained on how to conduct a first level assessment of the applications on a range of criteria. Each volunteer assessed 10-20 applications. Each application was reviewed by at least 3 reviewers.



In the next phase all applications were reviewed by staff at OutRight, distributing applications according to regional focus, language knowledge and other experience of the staff members in question. Each staff member reviewed between 70-150 applications.



The top scoring applications were additionally screened by senior management, through reference calls and emails, and other checks before a final list was selected.

# Grants Issued So Far

By the end of 2020 OutRight had distributed 3 rounds of grants totalling \$1 million, from applications received in the first round in April 2020. Funds went to 127 groups in 65 countries, helping more than 50,000 people.

By the end of August 2021, OutRight will have distributed approximately USD \$3.2M in grants to 310 groups in more than 102 countries, reaching an estimated 145,000+ people.

As we continue to raise funds for the Emergency Fund more rounds of grants will be released to the next highest scoring applicants.

**\$3.2M**  
**in grants**

Total disbursement

**310**

Groups

**102**

Countries

**145,000+**

People reached

*An applicant highlighted that the ongoing hunger experienced by LGBTIQ people, especially those employed in sex work – an industry which is often a last resort for people unable to obtain work elsewhere due to employment discrimination, and one which has been severely impacted by the pandemic and related lockdowns – is leading to an alarming rise in suicide rates among the community.*

# Funds Raised

OutRight is extremely grateful for the generosity and solidarity of the Fund's supporters. We could not have the impact we do without their leadership and contributions. The Fund was established:

With support from **Google.org**

## Founding Partners

CALVIN KLEIN



## Supporters

2K, Akamai Technologies Foundation, Barclays, Boohoo Group, Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Canadian Government, Capital One, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Channel Foundation, Council for Global Equality, Critical Role Foundation, Deloitte Services LP, Deutsche Bank, Double Dutch, Dreilinden, German Government, GiveOut, Groupe Dynamite (Dynamite & Garage), Henry M. Jackson Foundation, Herman Miller, Horizons Foundation, Hunter Boot, Humanity United, JAMF, Nomura Holdings America, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble Company (P&G), Rainbow Railroad, Salesforce, Scotiabank, Sellen Community Foundation,



Participant from Brujula Intersexual.

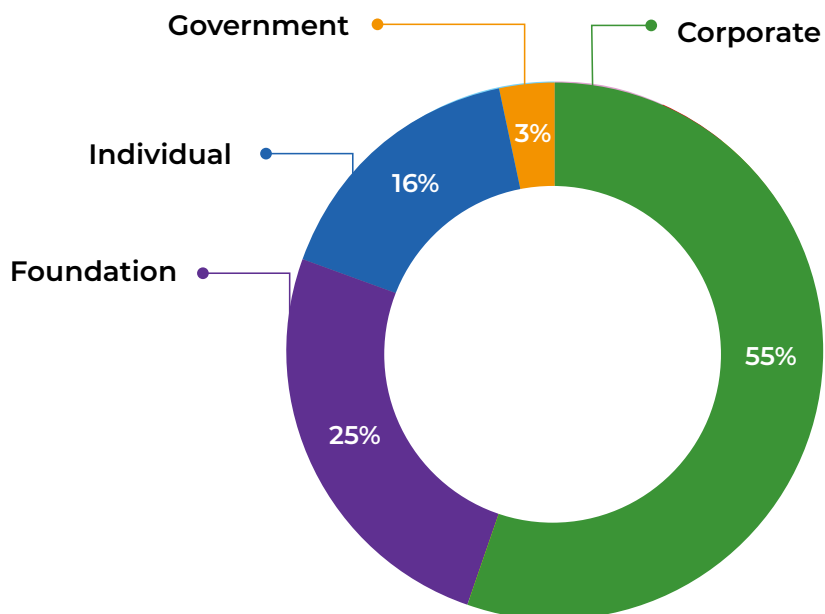
#StartSmall, Stonewall Community Foundation, Twitter, Visa, Warner Music Group, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, World Bank Group's Community Connections 2020 Campaign, and several institutions that have chosen to remain anonymous, along with 300+ individual donors.

## Collaborators

OutRight is deeply grateful to the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality (PGLE), a World Economic Forum Lighthouse Project, for its collaboration in widely promoting the Fund, and to the following institutions for their pro bono assistance in reviewing Fund applications: 2K, Barclays, Google, JAMF, JPMorgan Chase, EY, Microsoft, Nomura Holdings America, Out for Good/Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Open Finance NYC, Procter & Gamble, Salesforce, Scotiabank, Verizon, Warner Music Group.

Finally, many thanks to Global Citizen for selecting OutRight as one of its Equity Network Partners, and for calling on companies and philanthropists worldwide to contribute to OutRight's Emergency Fund as part of Global Citizen's 2021 Recovery for the World campaign.

## Contributions to the Fund



# Conclusion and Recommendations

**T**he nature of a pandemic is such that everyone is affected. However, as in any crisis situation, those who are most vulnerable and marginalized, feel the effects exponentially, as barriers, exclusion, hate and other factors experienced on a day to day basis become amplified. For LGBTIQ people the COVID-19 pandemic presented a crisis within a crisis. Due to over-representation in the informal job sector stemming from employment discrimination, LGBTIQ people across the world lost jobs and faced a devastation of livelihoods. This, in turn, led to loss of homes, hunger, and often forced LGBTIQ people to return to unsupportive or abusive families, leading to mounting domestic and family violence. Already strong barriers to accessing healthcare were amplified further. Non inclusive relief efforts leaving LGBTIQ people behind, and unequal access to vaccines mean the crisis has only deepened for LGBTIQ communities around the world.

The nature of a pandemic is also such that unless everyone is included, no one is protected. As long as communities keep being excluded from



*Members of Humraz Male Society from Pakistan box food and supplies.*

relief efforts, our economies will continue to lag, and the virus will continue to mutate, pushing the end of the pandemic farther, and farther away. It should not take a global crisis to prompt governments and agencies into action to tackle discrimination, harassment and exclusion faced by LGBTIQ people, but it serves as a sobering reminder of the fact that exclusion of one group has ripple effects across society.

OutRight's COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund stepped in to fill the gaps and support LGBTIQ organizations at a time of extraordinary need. We will continue to raise funds for the Fund, and continue to disburse grants in the coming months.

We are eternally grateful to the funders and supporters who have made this fund possible, and exceeded our expectations for its potential beyond our wildest dreams. To date, OutRight's Emergency Fund is the biggest global COVID-19 relief fund for LGBTIQ people.

In order to address the continuing crisis facing LGBTIQ people, and to avoid a similar crisis within a crisis in the future, OutRight calls on the International community, on governments, agencies and civil society to:

- Ensure meaningful and sustainable inclusion of LGBTIQ people in all humanitarian programming.
- Urgently expand vaccination efforts to low income countries, and ensure LGBTIQ-inclusive vaccine distribution, especially in countries which still criminalize same-sex relations and/or transgender identities.
- Engage in long-term campaigns and programming to facilitate acceptance of LGBTIQ people.
- Remove barriers to access to healthcare for LGBTIQ people.
- Provide relief programs for people employed in the informal employment sector, and, in the long run, tackle employment discrimination to eliminate the necessity for LGBTIQ people to seek employment informally.

To continue supporting OutRight's COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund, go [here](#).

*One applicant highlighted an exponential growth in calls for help to their hotline, most callers asking support for shelter and food, as well as psychological support due to abuse and violence in the home. Due to the drastic increase in calls, the organization is no longer able to staff the hotline with volunteers.*

