



INTEGRATING LGBTQI+ CONSIDERATIONS IN USAID'S RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMMING SECTORS

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TERMINOLOGY/ACRONYMS

“**SOGIESC**” is an acronym that stands for sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. Variations of this acronym (that drop letters) exist as well.

“**Sexual orientation**” refers to a person’s attraction(s) to others. Everyone has a sexual orientation. Categories include heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual.

“**Gender identity**” is a person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. Examples are that a person could identify with the societal role of a woman, a man, or neither.

“**Gender expression**” is about how a person demonstrates their gender through, for example, the way they act, dress, behave, and interact socially. Examples include being feminine, masculine, or neither.

“**Sex characteristics**” refers to the chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics used to classify an individual as female, male, or intersex.

“**LGBTQI+**” is an acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex. The “+” represents other sexual orientations and gender identities that do not fit within the “LGBTQI” identity labels. Variations of this acronym (that add or drop letters, like A for “asexual”) exist as well. Sometimes variations on this acronym (i.e., LGB, LGBT) are used depending on the subpopulations being referred to. Regardless of the acronym used, USAID’s intention is to be inclusive of the full diversity of genders and sexualities.

“**Lesbian**” refers to women who are emotionally and romantically attracted to other women.

“**Gay**” refers to men who are emotionally and romantically attracted to men, and is often used as an umbrella term for all people who experience same-sex attraction.

“**Bisexual**” refers to individuals who are emotionally and romantically attracted to both men and women.

“**Transgender**” is an umbrella term that refers to all people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth. The best way to explain this is through an example. Let’s say a baby is born and the doctor looks at the baby’s body and says, “It’s a girl!” In this case, we say the individual was “assigned female at birth.” However, as that baby grows into an infant, child, adolescent, and adult they realize that even though they might have female-typical body parts on the outside, on the inside they identify as a man - and that their thoughts, emotions, and feelings are those of a man. This is an example of a transgender man. Sometimes transgender people take steps to align their external appearance with their gender identity. Note that “cisgender” refers to a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned at birth (i.e., not a transgender person).

“**Queer**” is an umbrella term that is used by some people to refer to identities within the broad spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions that are considered outside of the mainstream, typically meaning non-heterosexual and/or not cisgender. Historically the term was used as a slur against LGBT people, but it has been reclaimed by the LGBTQI+ community.

However, some people may still find the term offensive. “Queer” now has particular relevance for individuals who reject binary definitions of male/female, gay/straight, masculine/feminine, and any other type of identity label (usually related to sexual and gender identity).

“**Intersex**” refers to people whose sex characteristics do not fit the typical definitions of male or female. Sex characteristics include external genitalia, hormones, chromosomes, and internal anatomy. Some people are born with external organs that are typical of males but internal organs that are typical of females—or vice versa; anatomy that appears to be in-between typical male and female anatomy; or chromosomes that aren’t typical of either male or female.

“**GSM**” is an acronym that stands for **gender and sexual minorities**. It is an umbrella term that refers to *all* people who are minorities based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, and/or sex characteristics. LGBTQI+ people are GSM: Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are minorities based on their sexual orientation; transgender people are minorities based on their gender identity and/or expression; and intersex people are minorities based on their sex characteristics. It is important to note that while all LGBTQI+ people are GSM, not all GSM identify with or use the term LGBTQI+. GSM may describe themselves in a variety of ways depending on culture, language, and local context. Examples include “men who have sex with men” (MSM), “women who have sex with women” (WSW), non-binary people, and specific populations that do not neatly fit into the LGBTQI+ label (some people who are considered “third-gender” but don’t necessarily fit under LGBTQI+ are referred to as “hijra” in India, “khawaja sarra” in Pakistan, “waria” in Indonesia, and “fa’afine” in Samoa). USAID uses the term “LGBTQI+” for consistency with the U.S. Government. That said, USAID’s programming aims to support all GSM (including those who do not use or identify with the LGBTQI+ label).

PART I: INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to help USAID's Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) and Mission colleagues (i.e., technical and program officers) and their implementing and other partners integrate lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) considerations into programming and across the Program Cycle. Its findings are based on desktop research on international standards and the efforts of USAID and other development organizations, as well as interviews with development professionals working in the sector.

This report identifies some of the primary challenges and obstacles that LGBTQI+ individuals face in accessing food security, resilience, nutrition, water security, sanitation and hygiene programs; provides approaches that can be used to integrate LGBTQI+ considerations into these sectors; and highlights best practices and programmatic examples from USAID Missions and around the world.

This document is organized into four parts. Part I summarizes the purpose and background. Part 2 provides an overview of LGBTQI+ inclusion and how it relates to RFS projects, why LGBTQI+ inclusion and inclusive development are relevant to RFS projects, and guiding principles for working on LGBTQI+ issues. Part 3 highlights key challenges and best practices, examples of USAID programming, and illustrative indicators. Part 4 concludes with a compilation of resources.

BACKGROUND

Inclusion and Inclusive Development

Inclusion is one of USAID's core values. USAID promotes a nondiscriminatory and inclusive approach to development that ensures that all people – including those who face discrimination and thus may have limited access to a country's benefits, legal protections, or social participation – are fully included and empowered to participate in and benefit from development processes and activities.

Inclusive development is the principle that every person, regardless of identity, is instrumental in the transformation of their own societies. It holds that inclusion throughout the development process leads to better outcomes. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that an inclusive development approach leads to better development outcomes.¹

Overview of LGBTQI+ issues

Violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization negatively affect the lives of millions of LGBTQI+ people around the world and contribute to poverty. LGBTQI+ people face criminalization in nearly 70 countries – several of which can impose the death penalty – and anti-LGBTQI+ violence can be life-threatening. Access to essential services, such as education and health, and to basic sustainable livelihoods is often denied to LGBTQI+ people.

¹ Additional Help for ADS 201 - Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle in Mission Operations. https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/additional_help_for_ads_201_inclusive_development_180726_final_r.pdf

USAID aims to help address anti-LGBTQI+ violence, stigma, discrimination, and criminalization; advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ people; and ensure LGBTQI+ people are meaningfully included in USAID's broader development and humanitarian programming. As noted in the [LGBT Vision for Action](#), USAID's vision is a world in which the human rights of all LGBTQI+ persons are respected and LGBTQI+ persons are able to live with dignity, free from discrimination, persecution, and violence. In this world, the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons are upheld; they are able to participate fully in democratic decision-making in their households, communities, and countries; they have equal access to sustainable livelihoods, economic assets, and resources; and they are not barred from accessing the education, health, and other services that are enjoyed by their fellow citizens and that are essential for personal wellbeing and growth.

The most recent research indicates that LGBTQI+ people and gender and sexual minorities (GSM) broadly make up approximately 3-5% of the global population, and that they exist in every country and are part of every religion, culture, and society.² Using this estimate, there are between 180-300 million LGBTQI+ people living in countries where USAID works. Often – due to the violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization they face – LGBTQI+ people are an “invisibilized population” and have a limited ability to access essential services and participate fully in development programs. These factors result in the aforementioned population size estimates to likely not represent the actual numbers of people with diverse gender and sexual identities.

There is great diversity among LGBTQI+ people; they are not a homogenous group. The needs and experiences of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual may be different from people who are transgender. Additionally, and importantly, LGBTQI+ individuals with multiple, intersecting identities may face compounded discrimination based on their ethnicity, caste, religion, or any number of other factors.

The Intersection of RFS and LGBTQI+ Issues

Violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization may limit LGBTQI+ peoples' full access to many of the programs supported by RFS and Mission programs in RFS sectors. An important first step to including LGBTQI+ considerations in RFS-sector programs is to be aware of the many ways LGBTQI+ people may be unintentionally excluded, and to recognize the additional challenges they face. In any RFS sector, implementing partners may unintentionally exclude LGBTQI+ people due to unfamiliarity with the population, unease in working with LGBTQI+ individuals, or lack of knowledge.

- *Agriculture and agriculture-led growth.* LGBTQI+ individuals may experience specific barriers not experienced by their peers. Due to violence, discrimination, stigma, and exclusion based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression, LGBTQI+ people may not have access to or inherit family land, or other resource sharing. Customary norms, traditional family structures, and other societal rules (both formal and informal) may marginalize LGBTQI+ people and exclude them from using communal land and other natural resources critical for rural livelihoods. Because of weak or non-existent family ties, and strained or non-existent inclusion in other communal networks, LGBTQI+ people may be unable to use family land/property as collateral to access a bank loan (i.e., to buy farming inputs and equipment). Additionally, they

² To date there has not been a definitive/fully conclusive study on the proportion of the global population that is LGBTQI+/GSM. The best and most recent country-, region-, and global-level studies all show population ranges of 1.2-6.8%, with the vast majority clustering in the 3-5% range. Issues that undermine this research and data collection include safety/security concerns that can impact an individual's willingness to identify as LGBTQI+/GSM on a survey, and culture/language-specific terminology that can influence how people from different parts of the world respond to survey questions.

may face barriers to accessing goods and services or employment in the agriculture sector – as businesses may discriminate against people based on sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

- *Nutrition.* In contexts characterized by anti-LGBTQI+ discrimination and stigma, the precarious economic situation that LGBTQI+ people face, including a lack of access to land and the prevalence of discrimination while seeking employment, may result in higher levels of malnourishment / undernourishment. LGBTQI+ people may face limited access to, or discrimination while accessing health services and nutrition information. Pregnant women who identify as lesbians have been found to have poorer health outcomes and lower birth weight infants than their heterosexual counterparts (Gonzalez 2018). Additionally, selective rationing or discriminatory provision of food within families may disproportionately disadvantage gender non-conforming youth and other gender and sexual minorities.
- *Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WSSH).* LGBTQI+ people may face difficulties accessing water and sanitation services. Typical approaches to sanitation prioritize sex-segregated latrine blocks in schools, health facilities, markets, and other public spaces. This approach can inadvertently result in risks for LGBTQI+ people – particularly those who identify as transgender, non-binary, or third-gender – and ultimately make services unsafe, inaccessible, or unacceptable. LGBTQI+ people may also face discrimination at public water points or may avoid public settings such as shared taps and latrines, impacting their access to water for household or personal use. Further, not all menstruators identify or present as female, creating additional WSSH challenges around menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), including procurement of supplies. Family rejection, and subsequent loss of private facilities, can exacerbate these challenges. Finally, LGBTQI+ individuals may not benefit equally from water resource allocation plans or be barred from participating in WSSH or water resources management (WRM) policy development and accountability activities, perpetuating inequitable access.
- *Resilience.* LGBTQI+ people are often marginalized in their community, and this marginalization makes them particularly vulnerable during shocks and stressors. Many LGBTQI+ individuals live outside of traditional family units (as they are often expelled from their families) and may not be eligible for program assistance which targets traditional family units. Additionally, in countries without legal gender recognition for transgender people or that have barriers to updating gender markers, transgender people may not possess a government-issued identity card that reflects their lived gender, thus preventing access to assistance, particularly in times of crisis. In addition, many traditional coping mechanisms deployed when there are shocks may be detrimental to LGBTQI+ individuals. For example, one response to stressors is an increase in child marriage as it often reduces the number of members in a household in exchange for an infusion of assets. When an LGBTQI+ person is forced into a marriage, it can lead to intimate partner violence and other forms of sexual violence. In some countries, young women suspected to be lesbian or bisexual may be forced to marry as a tactic to control their sexuality, and there are many documented cases of so-called “corrective” rape to “cure” or punish someone’s sexual orientation. Gay and bisexual men who are forced to marry may also suffer from deterioration of mental health and potential threats to physical security.

PART 2: APPROACHES FOR LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

USAID'S COMMITMENT TO LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

USAID is committed to inclusive development. In support of inclusive development, in 2014 USAID released its [LGBT Vision for Action](#), a document that reflects USAID's commitment to protect LGBTQI+ people from violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization and to advance their human rights. The LGBT Vision for Action establishes the following engagement objectives: 1) to account for country and cultural context, 2) to ensure openness and safety for dialogue, 3) to integrate LGBTQI+ issues into USAID's work, 4) to support LGBTQI+ communities, and 5) to build partnerships and create allies and champions.

USAID has a long history of advancing human rights through support and assistance to marginalized and vulnerable populations. USAID supports the human rights of LGBTQI+ people in particular through the integration of inclusion and nondiscrimination principles into USAID's policies and programming, and through programs that specifically address anti-LGBTQI+ violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization.³

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When working on LGBTQI+ issues USAID follows two guiding principles: "do no harm" and "do nothing about them without them."

1. **"Do no harm"** means taking measures to ensure that USAID's efforts do not put LGBTQI+ individuals or groups at increased risk of harm or raise their public profile in a way that could lead to backlash. This principle is especially important when working in contexts in which LGBTQI+ people are subjected to violence, discrimination, stigma, and/or criminalization. "Do no harm" does not mean "do nothing." Instead, it requires that Operating Units engage in a thoughtful manner that takes into consideration the safety and security concerns of the beneficiaries that USAID seeks to support. Examples of the "do no harm" principle include holding meetings with LGBTQI+ stakeholders in safe/secure settings, not sharing/using the names or photographs of LGBTQI+ beneficiaries or groups, utilizing marking and branding exemptions for LGBTQI+-related activities, and training implementing partners engaging in LGBTQI+ issues on how to ensure safety/security for both staff and beneficiaries.
2. **"Do nothing about them without them"** means that USAID should consult with LGBTQI+ individuals and groups in a manner that protects their privacy and safety before and throughout any engagement designed to support them. Instead of holding preconceived notions of what is needed or advancing a pre-set agenda, USAID should see itself as an ally to local groups and should seek to support their efforts. In practice, this means that USAID should engage in a thoughtful and continuous process of stakeholder consultations with a diverse array of LGBTQI+ individuals and groups to understand their needs, priorities, concerns, and guidance. These stakeholder consultations enhance the effectiveness of our engagement and reinforce the principle of "do no harm." Examples of following the "Do nothing about them without them" principle include only making public statements on LGBTQI+ issues when local groups support it, asking a wide array of LGBTQI+ Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) about what type of

³ While this document focuses on integrating LGBTQI+ considerations into broader programming, more information about USAID's approach to LGBTQI+-specific programs can be found here: <https://www.usaid.gov/LGBTQI>

USAID support would be most helpful and proceeding accordingly, and checking in with LGBTQI+ groups and individuals throughout project implementation to ensure that our efforts are being helpful and effective. One component of “Do nothing about them without them” is to allow individuals to self-identify; avoid making assumptions about sexual orientation or gender identity, pronouns, or aligned organizations and recognize that for many LGBTQI+ people, self-identification comes with risk and may take time.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

The principles of “do no harm” and “do nothing about them without them” should inform LGBTQI+ inclusion efforts. Often the most effective way to identify where and how LGBTQI+ integration would be most productive, safe, and welcome is to speak with local LGBTQI+ groups/stakeholders and ask them what they see as the priorities and needs for LGBTQI+ integration in a given sector.

USAID recommends staff and practitioners working in this sector consult with local LGBTQI+ Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), leaders, and members in a broad and inclusive manner to ensure that 1) USAID understands local priorities and needs, 2) USAID’s efforts do not raise the risk of harm or backlash, and 3) USAID’s support is welcomed by local groups and designed to be most effective. Meaningful engagement with local LGBTQI+ stakeholders often requires building rapport and trust, which can take time and commitment. Establishing and nurturing trusting relationships with local LGBTQI+ stakeholders help USAID understand the local context and can lead to better long-term partnership and collaboration opportunities. Thorough risk assessments can be undertaken with some guidance from local stakeholders to avoid inadvertent harm to LGBTQI+ communities (Williamson 2021). “Do no harm” approaches can also be customized for the relevant program context and the specific risks LGBTQI+ people face (Williamson 2021). Working with local partners who are acting within the target system can shed light on the behaviors that perpetuate exclusion and shed light on opportunities for wider social change (Williamson 2021).

LGBTQI+ stakeholder engagements should be conducted in a safe and secure manner. As with other marginalized populations, engagement should also be trauma-informed, meaning that it is sensitive to safety and security concerns and mitigates the risk of unintentionally triggering or exacerbating the emotional effects of trauma that the LGBTQI+ stakeholders may have experienced. Throughout the consultation process, those conducting the consultations should carefully manage stakeholder expectations (i.e., do not promise or lead groups to expect funding or programming), and make it clear that USAID aims to address local needs and support local priorities.

Trauma-Informed Engagement with LGBTQI+ Stakeholders

When setting up LGBTQI+ stakeholder consultations, organizers should consider:

- Using preferred communications platforms to ensure comfort and safety
- Writing personalized messages and individualized emails (rather than mass emails) when first establishing relationships and trust with stakeholders
- Providing information in advance regarding the purpose, length, and use of the outcomes from the consultation
- Consulting many different groups of people to ensure diverse representation
- Asking stakeholders to select meeting locations or verifying with participants that the proposed location is safe
- Informing stakeholders of who will participate in the meeting

- Clearly stating the protocols regarding photos, video and audio recording, and other documentation of participation, and explaining plans for encrypting and protecting data

When commencing LGBTQI+ stakeholder consultations, organizers should consider:

- Ensuring the location is sufficiently private and secure
- Introducing themselves and all participants with names, pronouns, roles, and organizational affiliation
- Thanking stakeholders for their time
- Permitting stakeholders to skip or decline to answer any questions
- Reviewing confidentiality norms prior to commencing dialogue
- Agreeing with participants the mode of taking notes (hand-written, typed, etc.)

When conducting LGBTQI+ stakeholder consultations, organizers should consider:

- Using active listening techniques with nonverbal communications
- Clustering questions thematically and informing stakeholders when moving to new topics to create a sense of predictability
- Attending to stakeholder's immediate needs if they become distressed
- Normalizing empathy and holding space for difficult topics
- Avoiding inquiries about details regarding specific, traumatic incidents in a group setting to prevent re-traumatization
- Inviting stakeholders to ask questions about the purpose of the consultation, use of outcomes, and next steps

PART 3: HOW TO INTEGRATE LGBTQI+ CONSIDERATIONS IN RFS WORK

MAKING THE CASE FOR LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

USAID works to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ people and protect them from violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization. This requires USAID to take an inclusive approach to development that works with and for marginalized populations and people in vulnerable situations. USAID staff and partners are often called upon in their work to explain, advocate for, or defend USAID's programmatic and funding approach above and beyond USAID's core mission statement. They may have to communicate these priorities to host country officials, private sector partners, local communities, or even United States government personnel in other agencies. As such, it is important that RFS staff, Mission staff working in RFS sector programming (including Foreign Service Nationals and Mission leadership), and partners understand and can communicate the rationale for supporting LGBTQI+ inclusion. The following points help "make the case" for LGBTQI+ inclusion in RFS sectors work:

- Inclusion is one of USAID's core values. One way that USAID helps its partners lead their own development journeys is to ensure that a wide range of beneficiaries is fully included in USAID's programs. USAID would not be able to achieve many of its development objectives without including marginalized and excluded groups.
- There is a strong, positive correlation between economic development and legal rights for LGBTQI+ people. The presence of an LGBT-inclusive anti-discrimination law is correlated with a \$1,763 increase in GDP per capita across a range of countries (Badgett, Nezhad, Waaldijk, and van der Muelen Rodgers 2014).
- There is a strong, positive correlation between LGBTQI+ social acceptance and GDP per capita. A one point increase on the Global Acceptance Index ([GAI](#)) - an index that measures each country's societal acceptance of LGBT people in 174 countries - is correlated with a \$1,506 increase in GDP per capita (Badgett, Park, and Flores 2018).
- While the causal relationship between inclusion and economic development is complex and not unidirectional, LGBTQI+ inclusion demonstrably leads to economic growth by expanding the number of people participating in the workforce, increasing the number of skilled workers, and decreasing the negative health impacts of discrimination that can lead to decreased workforce participation (Badgett, Nezhad, Waaldijk, and van der Muelen Rodgers 2014; Badgett, Park, and Flores 2018).
- LGBTQI+ inclusion does not necessarily increase the cost of an activity. In many cases, meaningful LGBTQI+ inclusion can be accomplished by contacting and meeting with local LGBTQI+ CSOs, understanding their needs/priorities as they relate to a sector/development programming, and sharing information with them about current and planned programs and activities (i.e., trainings) to ensure they are aware of them, have avenues to participate, and can share relevant information with their membership networks.
- The promotion of human rights and inclusion for LGBTQI+ people increases the overall stability and safety in countries where USAID works. Meaningful engagement and participation of

LGBTQI+ people in development programs will increase their standing in society, enhance social cohesion, and lead to more democratic societies.

- Article 23.I of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) links human rights, development, and employment, stating that, “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.”
- USAID’s [Market Systems Resilience Framework](#) outlines the importance of diverse market actors in the face of shocks and stressors. LGBTQI+ inclusion in market systems is a recognized attribute of diversity which in turn leads to private sector innovation, expansion, and improved brand reputation, among other outcomes (Williamson 2021).

CHALLENGES/ISSUES

There are many challenges to advancing LGBTQI+ inclusion in food security, resilience, nutrition, water security, sanitation and hygiene programs. Some of these include:

- **Challenges in collecting and protecting SOGIESC data.** Often RFS-related programs may only collect binary sex data from program participants - if at all. These data will not enable program staff to understand the ways that gender and sexual minorities and other segments of the LGBTQI+ community are benefitting from programs. Due to widespread discrimination, stigma, and criminalization, collection of data pertaining to an individual’s sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sex characteristics must be safeguarded and protected in full alignment with the “do no harm” principle. ACDI/VOCA offers some [considerations](#) for collecting these data to inform resilience, food security, and market system development programs, including partnering with LGBTQI-led organizations.
- **Limited existing research on the intersection of LGBTQI+ people and RFS-related issues.** There is a dearth of research material available on LGBTQI+ inclusion in agriculture, food security, resilience, nutrition, water security, sanitation, and hygiene. [The Hidden Mirror: Sexual and Gender Minorities in Agricultural Research](#) notes that there is “very little literature on sexual and gender minorities in agriculture, nor is evidence found of agricultural policies which reference these groups.” Research on LGBTQI+ integration into development programs focusing on nutrition, water security, sanitation, and hygiene is similarly lacking. In [LGBTI and Sanitation: What We Know and What the Gaps Are](#), the authors note that LGBTQI+ individuals are left out of most WSSH considerations, a sentiment echoed in research found in [Transgender Inclusive Sanitation: Insights from South Asia](#). The book [Water Security Across the Gender Divide](#) notes “the roles of LGBT [people] in the water sector are highly under-researched.” Searches on USAID’s [Development Experience Clearinghouse](#) and the USAID-affiliated websites AgriLinks.org, MarketLinks.org, ResilienceLinks.org, GlobalWaters.org, and AdvancingNutrition.org found no mention of LGBTQI+ inclusion in any of these sectors. The dearth of data should not be interpreted to suggest there is a lack of discrimination, stigma, and violence experienced by LGBTQI+ people. Rather, the lack of data demonstrates the topic is under-researched and USAID should endeavor to more fully understand the unique challenges and needs of LGBTQI+ people in this sector.
- **Limited best practices on which to draw.** There are some documented examples of LGBTQI+ inclusion efforts in RFS sectors from the United States. [Relational Agriculture: Gender, Sexuality, and Sustainability in U.S. Farming](#) advocates for gender and sexuality to be

“understood as central to the study of food systems and food security rather than as a niche topic.” The article [Queer Farmers: Sexuality and the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture](#) argues that “sexuality and heteronormativity are embedded in farmer recruitment, retention, and land acquisition” and offers a lens for envisioning alternatives within the sustainable agriculture space. [Midwest or Lesbian? Gender, Rurality, and Sexuality](#) and [Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America](#) illustrate the importance of analyzing the impact of geographical location on LGBTQI+ people’s experiences. [Lesbianism and Queer Sustainable Farmers Networks in the Midwest](#) emphasizes the importance of LGBTQI+ farmer networks in “bolstering human resources in sustainable agriculture and conservation practices.” [Food Insecurity and SNAP \(Food Stamp\) Participation in the LGBT Community](#) and [Food Insecurity Among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Individuals in the Southeast United States: A Qualitative Study](#) discuss the substantial barriers that LGBTQI+ people face when trying to acquire adequate food that result in LGBTQI+ adults experiencing food insecurity and participating in SNAP at higher rates than non-LGBTQI+ adults. The two articles also suggest public health based solutions. However, there are very few existing examples of LGBTQI+ inclusion in agriculture, food security, resilience, nutrition, water security, and sanitation and hygiene programs in the developing world.

- **Difficulties reaching LGBTQI+ people in rural areas.** Many RFS-supported activities take place outside of urban areas. For many reasons, including family rejection and the desire to find an accepting community, LGBTQI+ people from non-urban areas may immigrate to urban areas. The LGBTQI+ people who remain living in rural areas are often not open about their identities for many reasons, including violence, discrimination, stigma, and criminalization. These factors combine to result in decreased autonomy over one’s future, especially for LBQ women. Additionally, LGBTQI+ people in rural areas may be somewhat isolated and/or lack robust local social support networks, and therefore are less likely to be able to organize themselves or to participate in formal or informal consultation or decision-making processes. If they have any affiliation with in-country LGBTQI+ groups, they are more likely to be able to organize through informal networks that are accessible through connections with LGBTQI+ CSOs in more urban areas.
- **A population that is overlooked, misunderstood, and discriminated against.** Development partners may overlook LGBTQI+ concerns due to unease, bias, lack of knowledge, and/or uncertainty of the protocols to address issues relevant to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression across different cultural contexts.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LGBTQI+ INCLUSION

To design LGBTQI-inclusive programs, consider incorporating some of the following approaches. Note that not all of these approaches will be relevant or appropriate in each country context.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL RFS SECTORS

- **Signal the importance of nondiscrimination and inclusive development.** Mention USAID's commitment to nondiscrimination and inclusive development in solicitations and explicitly list several demonstrative marginalized groups (i.e., persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples) that the implementing partner should make intentional efforts to include.
- **Support groundbreaking research.** While LGBTQI+ individuals make up a sizable number of USAID's beneficiaries, there is almost no research on their access to and inclusion in the sectors covered by RFS. Investing in research can help identify constraints to and opportunities for LGBTQI+ inclusion. Determining the specific constraints that LGBTQI+ people face in accessing and being meaningfully included in RFS programs will be key to developing better-informed inclusion strategies.
- **Engage with local and/or regional LGBTQI+ CSOs.** Engage with local and regional LGBTQI+ CSOs or groups, where they exist. They may be able to provide information or guidance on how to make programs LGBTQI-inclusive. Note that while these groups may be based in cities, they often have LGBTQI+ networks and contacts across the country, including in rural areas, that can help inform the conversation. These CSOs may not be experts on food security, agriculture, nutrition, resilience, or WSSH. However, if you share programming ideas with them, they will likely be able to tell you how to include LGBTQI+ people in related activities.
- **Invite LGBTQI+ people to participate in specific activities.** After establishing contact and building trust with local LGBTQI+ CSOs, share with them information about upcoming activities (i.e., trainings, workshops, research, job fairs, networking) and identify ways to invite LGBTQI+ people to engage as general participants (i.e., the LGBTQI+ CSO can extend the invitation to its network). Note that participants may face barriers to participation such as transportation expenses and/or stigma, discrimination, and violence if required to present an identification document. It is important that anyone who is aware of the individual's status as an LGBTQI+ person *not* share that information with other participants.
- **Train implementing partner staff.** Provide nondiscrimination and inclusive development training to implementing partner staff. USAID Missions have hosted a variety of nondiscrimination and inclusive development trainings for *all* implementing partners to share expectations and raise awareness of USAID's inclusive approach to development. Building the capacity of non-LGBTQI-led organizations and implementing providers to competently serve the LGBTQI+ community is essential. While multiple or continuing training is ideal, even a single session is a good starting point.
- **Support policy work on inclusion.** Continue to work with the relevant government officials, in coordination with the interagency, to create and evaluate policies that support inclusion, particularly LGBTQI+ inclusion.

Promising Approaches for LGBTQI+ Inclusion

Implementing partner staff should be trained on inclusive development in general and how to safely work with LGBTQI+ people.

The implementing partner should learn the specific risks that LGBTQI+ people are facing in the country at the structural (i.e., policy and legal) and interpersonal levels.

The implementing partner should seek guidance from local LGBTQI+ CSOs or other community-based organizations working directly with LGBTQI+ individuals.

LGBTQI+ people and/or CSO members should be involved in identifying their needs/priorities and recommending how the program should respond to those needs/priorities.

The implementing partner should engage with LGBTQI+ individuals in a way that effectively mitigates risk and is consistent with the “Do No Harm” principle.

Program messaging and community training should be provided in ways that include LGBTQI+ individuals.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the above recommendations, which apply to all sectors, the below recommendations are sector-specific.

AGRICULTURE, AGRICULTURE-LED GROWTH, AND FOOD SECURITY

LGBTQI+ individuals may experience specific barriers in agriculture and agriculture-led growth not experienced by their peers. With a focus on inclusive employment practices, equitable access to input, output and service markets, outreach to LGBTQI+ CSOs, engaging public and private sector actors around the business case, and nondiscrimination in hiring, USAID can make these programs more inclusive.

- **Support research.** There is significant research being conducted at the nexus of gender and agriculture, women’s access to resources, and the effect of women’s inclusion on GDP. However, most of this work focuses exclusively on cisgender, heterosexual individuals. More research is needed to close the knowledge gap through research on LGBTQI+ inclusion opportunities in agriculture-led growth and food security.
- **Make connections between LGBTQI+ individuals and employment opportunities.** Since LGBTQI+ people in developing countries face discrimination in accessing jobs, and often need income-generating activities and livelihoods support, implementing partners should aim to connect LGBTQI+ individuals with agriculture employment opportunities (i.e., with commercial farmers or agro-enterprises that may have jobs in processing, packaging, storage, equipment services) related to RFS programs. Building a pipeline of qualified LGBTQI+ candidates to

employers that are open to recruiting and retaining LGBTQI+ employees is an important strategy for sustainable livelihoods.

- **Support comprehensive employment nondiscrimination policies and practices.** RFS programs can help support LGBTQI+ inclusion by ensuring agribusinesses supported by USAID have comprehensive (LGBTQI-inclusive) employment nondiscrimination policies and practices. This recommendation aligns with USAID's nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policies (see Part 4 of this document), which prohibit contractors, grant recipients, and their sub-awardees from discriminating against any foreign aid beneficiaries on the basis of any factor not expressly stated in the award (this includes but is not limited to sexual orientation and gender identity).

NUTRITION

Due to discrimination from their families and societies, food insecurity can disproportionately affect LGBTQI+ individuals. The limited research that exists on this topic focuses primarily on the United States. A Williams Institute report found that LGB people were more likely to report food insecurity than heterosexual people, and that pregnant women who identify as lesbians experience poorer health outcomes (Gonzales 2018) and give birth to infants with a lower birth-weight (Everett 2018) than heterosexual women. Additionally, crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a drastic increase in food insecurity among LGBTQI+ people worldwide (Bishop 2020).

- **Support research.** Research on malnutrition among LGBTQI+ people, including pregnant women in developing countries is critical to addressing these challenges. Identify the causes and determine nutrition-specific interventions.
- **Collaborate with LGBTQI-led organizations.** Partner with LGBTQI-led organizations to ensure that LGBTQI+ people are receiving nutrition information and commodities. Taking a decentralized approach to distribution of nutrition resources may be an effective solution for “hard to reach” groups or individuals who may not feel comfortable accessing resources directly from providers.

WATER SECURITY, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

LGBTQI+ people face numerous barriers accessing WSSH services, and may require different interventions based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

- **Prioritize inclusive messaging.** Ensure that WSSH messaging and public information campaigns show people with diverse gender identities and family structures, and work through local LGBTQI+ CSOs to ensure the messaging reaches a broad audience.
- **Ensure inclusive participation.** Actively seek to include LGBTQI+ CSOs or individuals, where it is safe for them, in governance processes, multi-stakeholder platforms, workforce development, community mobilization, and other efforts designed to address barriers to accessing safe drinking water, improved sanitation, hygiene and menstrual hygiene supplies, and water resource allocations.
- **Ensure WSSH facilities are safe, accessible, and acceptable to LGBTQI+ people.** When designing physical structures, implementing partners should consult with LGBTQI+ CSOs to identify safety issues related to where, when, and how LGBTQI+ and other vulnerable groups will access and use the WSSH infrastructure. Note that LGBTQI+ individuals may feel unsafe

accessing public WSSH facilities but equally may be unsafe collecting surface water instead of using public taps, or urinating or defecating in the open rather than using communal latrines. Consultation can include asking for information on what types of violence, stigma, and discrimination LGBTQI+ individuals and groups might encounter in WSSH infrastructure. According to a 2017 online survey in Malaysia, 40 out of 97 transgender respondents said they had experienced discrimination while using WSSH facilities, and 26 out of 97 faced challenges accessing these facilities in their workplace.⁴ Creating a single-user facility that anyone can use may be an acceptable and cost-effective solution, but this also may require behavior and social norms change work in communities accustomed to, or expressing strong preference for, sex segregated latrines, which are often viewed as the best approach for preserving gender norms around privacy and protection. Additionally, mandatory use of single-user facilities for gender non-conforming people can further stigmatization and potentially expose users to violence, so this underscores the necessity to actively consult with community-based and LGBTQI-led organizations. Policy decisions can build on current guidance and programming in female friendly latrines and menstrual health and hygiene management, which can be found at [Global Waters](#), [Sanitation Learning Hub](#), [WaterAid](#), and [LGBTI and Sanitation](#).

- **Seek to provide household services for all.** Consider providing sanitation facilities and related products like menstrual hygiene supplies in locations where LGBTQI+ individuals are known to live, including for communal housing used by chosen families and cultural third gender groups⁵ (where these services can be provided safely). Providing household access to safe drinking water and sanitation is the optimal approach, both for ensuring access and use, and for protecting LGBTQI+ from potentially vulnerable situations when using public services. Consider working through local LGBTQI+ CSOs or through informal networks.

RESILIENCE

USAID defines resilience as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.” Shocks and stressors can exacerbate both existing prejudices against and vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ individuals, and can showcase their abilities to develop and mobilize different resilience capacities. Here are some best practices for integrating LGBTQI+ individuals in resilience activities:

- **Reach out to LGBTQI+ CSOs and networks.** LGBTQI+ individuals may be excluded from development programs and program planning due to pervasive stigma and discrimination, fear of violence, and issues with ID cards or lack thereof. This may cause these communities to instead rely on their own informal networks. Programs should contact LGBTQI+ CSOs to ensure LGBTQI+ individuals are not unintentionally excluded from program planning or excluded as beneficiaries, as well as build off the strengths of preexisting networks and support systems.
- **Ensure that programs embrace the principle of non-discrimination, include all families, and don’t only target men and women.** Programs targeting communities who are vulnerable to or recovering from shocks and stressors often define the traditional family unit as the primary recipient unit for assistance. However, many LGBTQI+ people are forced out of

⁴ A Preliminary Study on Transgender Issues: A Case Study on Justice for Sister (JFS) as a New Social Movement in Malaysia

⁵ “Chosen family” refers to people with no biological relation that have been “chosen” by LGBTQI+ people to fulfill a similar, supportive role in life. “Cultural third gender” refers to gender identities that are distinct from traditional male or female identities. For example, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan all have legal recognition of a third gender.

their families, and therefore may be excluded from assistance and/or their chosen family structure is not recognized as a traditional family unit. In scenarios in which programs target “families,” ensure that all families (i.e., same-sex couples, transgender individuals living together) are included in the definition of households/families that are eligible to receive aid/assistance. Additionally, consider using “representative of the family,” rather than “head of household” or other terminology that may exclude some genders and/or narrowly define beneficiaries. Access to food and basic necessities can also be hampered when distribution and/or policies are conducted along binary guidelines. For example, during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Panama issued guidelines mandating separate shopping days for men and women. This exposed transgender people to increased profiling, harassment, and abuse from law enforcement, particularly for transgender people without a government-issued identification card that matched their lived gender (Bishop 2020).

- Ensure people without national identity cards that reflect their gender can access programs.** In many countries, transgender people are prevented from updating their gender markers on national identity cards to reflect their gender, and in some cases, they may not have identity cards at all. Most governments are unwilling to amend or reissue national identity cards for transgender people, or impose high barriers to do so. Furthermore, transgender people whose gender expression differs from the gender marker on national identity cards may experience discrimination, violence, or other consequences when seeking services or assistance. As a result, projects that require beneficiaries to present a national identity card may exclude some LGBTQI+ people. For example, after floods in Pakistan in 2011, transgender individuals were denied access to assistance and shelter because their gender expression didn’t match the gender listed on their official identity cards. In Jakarta in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a local CSO found that 640 transgender people in Jakarta who lost their jobs were unable to access food benefits due to their gender identity or lack of identity cards (Bishop 2020). Implementing partners should be aware of this reality and should attempt to accommodate and include individuals who would otherwise be eligible to receive assistance, but lack an identification card that reflects their lived gender.
- Monitor hate speech, discriminatory policies, and other efforts to target the LGBTQI+ community during shocks and stressors.** In some countries, government officials or non-state actors may scapegoat, blame, or target the LGBTQI+ community during a crisis. It is extremely important to proactively monitor discriminatory policies and hate speech that may arise following a crisis, as well as actively consult LGBTQI+ community-based organizations to understand how USAID can provide support. In instances like these, community-led organizations may recommend withdrawing or reducing public support for their issues.

EXAMPLES OF LGBTQI+ INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING

USAID aims to promote nondiscrimination and inclusion in its programming. Some examples of inclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals in USAID and other programs are listed below:

USAID Programs

Agriculture

- The [Mas Riego Program](#) in Guatemala aimed to increase farmers’ incomes and their use of climate-smart strategies, including drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, reduced tillage, mulch

use, and diverse crop rotation. USAID's implementing partner worked with a local LGBTQI+ CSO to develop and provide program staff with a [one-day training on human rights, including discussion of the local LGBT community](#).

Resilience

- [USAID's Disaster Risk Reduction \(DRR\) Program](#) in Nepal, implemented by the Nepali CSO National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), reached out to a local LGBTQI+ CSO and provided community-based disaster risk reduction training to their members. NSET also set up a half-day workshop for organizations working on DRR and LGBTQI+ CSOs called "How to Make Disaster Risk Reduction LGBT-Inclusive."

Non-USAID Programs

- [Lavender Acres](#) is a pig farm in Uganda owned and run by transgender individuals. Its origins come from the donation of a farm and became reality because of a Ugandan LGBTQI+ individual who wanted to help change the stereotype of what transgender individuals could do in Uganda. It currently houses and trains 10 people, teaching farming skills and business management skills.
- [Micro Rainbow International Foundation](#) provides economic empowerment and advocacy support to LGBTQI+ people in select developing countries. Given that LGBTQI+ people in rural Cambodia lacked access to the land and loans required to engage in farming, Micro Rainbow helped them access land and loans. Beneficiaries were identified and selected through radio advertisements and through referrals from LGBTQI+ CSOs based in the capital city. Micro Rainbow helped each beneficiary obtain credit to start or expand their farming enterprise.
- The [California Rural Legal Assistance LGBT Program](#) supports low-income individuals from rural areas in California. Its LGBT Program provides legal assistance to LGBT people to protect them against discrimination in rural agrarian activities and provide general community support and leadership classes.

ILLUSTRATIVE CUSTOM INDICATORS⁶

Below is a list of illustrative LGBTQI-inclusive custom indicators for RFS-sector programs:

- Number of research reports conducted that identify the barriers faced by LGBTQI+ people in RFS sectors and opportunities for meaningful inclusion
- Number of LGBTQI+ CSOs consulted in the project implementation stage to share information about project activities and engagement/employment opportunities (and to have this information shared with broader in-country LGBTQI+ networks)
- Number of project staff trained on nondiscrimination and inclusive development
- Number of agribusinesses/water businesses/sanitation businesses that develop comprehensive employment nondiscrimination policies and practices
- Number of activities that help include as beneficiaries LGBTQI+ individuals who do not have accurate national identity cards
- Number of activities that distribute assistance to non-traditional families (i.e., those led by or comprised of LGBTQI+ people)

⁶ While disaggregation by sex (male/female) is mandatory (ADS 201.3.5.7 (G), ADS 205.3.6), at this time we do not recommend using indicators that *require* beneficiaries to self-identify as LGBTQI+. While it is possible to conduct anonymous surveys, data security remains a concern.

- Number of emergency shelters, water points, and latrines that are accessible to and safe for LGBTQI+ people (i.e., have intentional plans or designs to include LGBTQI+ people)
- Number of participatory processes (government, non-governmental or USAID led) that include LGBTQI+ organizations or individuals

PART 4: CONCLUSION AND RESOURCES

RFS and the Mission programs it supports cover a broad range of sectors and have much potential scope for LGBTQI+ inclusion in their activities. It is important to reference the intentional inclusion of marginalized groups⁷ (i.e., LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, religions/ethnic minorities) in sector policies, guidance documents, and practices. Marginalized groups, including LGBTQI+ people, may face many barriers to full participation in the development programs run by USAID. Recognizing these barriers is the first step towards eliminating them. By making concerted efforts to include LGBTQI+ individuals in the full range of training, workshop, programs and research managed by RFS and related Mission programs, USAID can meaningfully increase LGBTQI+ inclusion.

NEXT STEPS

USAID offers the following recommendations to Mission and technical staff throughout the Agency.

Engage in consultations with LGBTQI+ organizations. When preparing to integrate LGBTQI+ considerations, it is important to engage with LGBTQI+ CSOs, leaders, and community members to better understand the local context and priorities. In designing and setting up programs, consult with local and regional LGBTQI+ CSOs in focus countries to learn what issues and constraints LGBTQI+ people face related to WSSH, nutrition, agriculture-led growth, and resilience, and determine what role they would like USAID to play to advance LGBTQI+ inclusion in these sectors. Also, USAID can share its upcoming programs with these groups and ask them if they see any opportunities for engagement. Even in situations where programs take place in areas without LGBTQI+ CSOs, it is likely that LGBTQI+ CSOs in nearby urban areas (or the capital city) have strong connections with informal networks of LGBTQI+ people in rural areas.

Train implementing partners. Missions working in RFS sectors have already conducted some inclusion training for implementing partners (for example, “Mas Riego” in Guatemala). This could be expanded to other implementing partners, including providing a training on USAID’s nondiscrimination for beneficiaries policy, and on the importance of and ways to better advance inclusive development.

Support research on LGBTQI+ inclusion. Research on LGBTQI+ inclusion in agriculture and food security, nutrition, resilience, water security, sanitation and hygiene is almost entirely absent outside of the western context. RFS could consider expanding its research agenda to look at LGBTQI+ inclusion in its programming.

⁷ USAID’s Definition of Marginalized Groups: “People who are typically denied access to legal protection or social and economic participation and programs (i.e., police protection, political participation, access to healthcare, education, employment), whether in practice or in principle, for historical, cultural, political, and/or other contextual reasons. Such groups may include, but are not limited to, women and girls, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, displaced persons, migrants, indigenous individuals and communities, youth and the elderly, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, people in lower castes, and people of diverse economic class and political opinions. These groups often suffer from discrimination in the application of laws and policy and/or access to resources, services, and social protection, and may be subject to persecution, harassment, and/or violence. They may also be described as ‘underrepresented,’ ‘at-risk,’ or ‘vulnerable.’”

NONDISCRIMINATION FOR BENEFICIARIES

Nondiscrimination is a basic principle of development. USAID has strong and comprehensive nondiscrimination policies pertaining to beneficiaries in its contracts and grants. Historically there have been credible reports of USAID implementers discriminating against beneficiaries in accessing services, particularly with respect to LGBTQI+ individuals.

Under these policies, USAID employees, contractors, and grant recipients are explicitly prohibited from discriminating against any foreign aid beneficiaries on the basis of any factor not expressly stated in the award. That means all beneficiaries should be able to participate in USAID programs without discrimination based on their race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy status), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran's status.

These policies apply to all contracts and grants (and their sub-contracts and sub-grants). Discrimination against a beneficiary is considered noncompliance and can be treated as such. These policies can be found in ADS 200 (USAID employees), ADS 302 (contractors), and ADS 303 (grant recipients). More information can be found at [policies on nondiscrimination for access to services for beneficiaries](#).

RESOURCES AND TOOLS

USAID's LGBT Vision for Action. A foundational document that communicates USAID's position on LGBTQI+ issues, both internally and externally.

USAID's Support for LGBTQI+ People Fact Sheet. A document that highlights USAID's approach to promoting and protecting the human rights of LGBTQI+ people around the world and describes eight ways USAID supports LGBTQI+ people.

Two Page Description of USAID's LGBTQI+ Portfolio. A document that outlines the realities faced by LGBTQI+ people around the world and USAID's approach to supporting LGBTQI+ people.

Suggested Approaches for Integrating Inclusive Development Across the Program Cycle and in Mission Operations. This document explains what Inclusive Development is and why it is important to USAID's work. It serves as a framework for applying various USAID policies and guidance that promote inclusion of marginalized groups, and provides guidance to help Missions and Operating Units to integrate Inclusive Development across the Program Cycle and operations.

Nondiscrimination for Beneficiaries. Frequently asked questions on USAID's policy on nondiscrimination for beneficiaries. USAID has a robust Nondiscrimination Policy for Access to Services for Beneficiaries; it includes protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Pride Month Blog Series: Why the Inclusion of LGBTQI+ Populations in Agriculture and Market Systems Matters. A blog by ACDI/VOCA VP of gender and social inclusion Jenn Williamson on economic and social benefits of including LGBTQ+ groups in not only agriculture, market systems and development programming, but society at large.

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