# EFFECTIVE SOGIE INCLUSION IN TIMES OF DISASTER:

# A GUIDE FOR HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES IN VANUATU AND THE PACIFIC

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## List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| EM | Emergency Management |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| GPC | Gender Protection Cluster |
| LGBT | Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender |
| LGBTQIA | Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual |
| SOGIE | Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression |
| SOGIESC | Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics |
| TC | Tropical Cyclone |
| UNOHCHR | United Nations Office of the High Commision of Human Rights |

# Executive Summary

This report is designed to support and advocate for the inclusion, safety and security of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGIE) during times of disaster.

The report includes:

➢ Background research on inclusion of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity in times of disaster
➢ A review of legal and humanitarian inclusion guidelines relevant to SOGIE inclusion
➢ Vanuatu research on SOGIE inclusion by humanitarian actors
➢ Vanuatu research on challenges faced by SOGIE diverse people in times of disaster
➢ A comprehensive inclusion guide and assessment tools for humanitarian organizations

Even though there is a clear legal and humanitarian mandate for the inclusion and protection of SOGIE diverse people in times of disaster, both global and local research confirmed that this is not currently a part of the humanitarian agenda. As such, this guide is a direct response to a recommendation, issued in the recent report from UN Women, *The Only Way is Up*, for "*more funding and support for LGBT civil society groups to work in emergency programmes, ...(and) pressures and incentives for humanitarian and disaster response organizations to include more attention to LGBT concerns, which has lagged behind greater inclusion around other characteristics such as gender, disability and age*"[1].

This report is accompanied by additional materials, available at the VPride website:

➢ *SOGIE booklet* – a comprehensive, educational booklet, that uses a human-rights based approach to present information, legal background, and best practices for SOGIE inclusion in families, communities, workplaces, education, health care, and safety and justice.The SOGIE booklet is available in English, French and Bislama.

➢ *SOGIE Diversity in Vanuatu* – the first research report on SOGIE-diverse people in Vanuatu[2]

➢ *Online Course in SOGIE inclusion in Times of Disaster* – a free online course for humanitarian actors on how to effectively include SOGIE diverse people in disaster planning and response. The course covers the material in this booklet, along with assessment quizzes. Those completing the course will be sent a Certificate in SOGIE Inclusion, awarded by VPride.

This document was produced by VPride, the only organization dedicated to supporting SOGIE diverse people in Vanuatu. It was generously supported by a grant from Kaleidoscope Trust and the Commonwealth Equality Network under the Reversing the Tide Small Grants initiative. VPride acknowledges the valuable contributions of its staff, the insights and experiences shared by the organizations and individuals that were interviewed for the project, and the technical support provided by Human Capacity Development International (HCDI).

# 1. Introduction

Worldwide, there has been increasing recognition that LGBTQI people are "more likely than others to be severely impacted by disasters"[3] :

- o "Research has shown that after a disaster, LGBTQ people are more likely to be socially isolated and face disrespect or harassment in settings such as emergency shelters"[4].
- o "The discrimination, violence and isolation LGBT people face before, during and after emergencies weakens their ability to live resilient and dignified lives, survive and recover"[5].
- o "… humanitarian and disaster response organizations do not appear to be systematically dealing with the problem"[6].
- o "Some LGBTI people are reluctant to access emergency services because of historic and ongoing discrimination and abuse experienced by them and their communities"[7].

A recent report from UN Women recommended "*more funding and support for LGBT civil society groups to work in emergency programmes, ...(and) pressures and incentives for humanitarian and disaster response organizations to include more attention to LGBT concerns, which has lagged behind greater inclusion around other characteristics such as gender, disability and age*" [8].

In Vanuatu, there is little to no research or recognition of these issues and needs. Being # 1 on the World Risk Index, Vanuatu regularly experiences severe cyclones, floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcano eruptions and other disasters[9]. While the government and its humanitarian partners have worked hard on developing a national disaster management system, this system does not include SOGIE diverse people in pre-, during, or post-disaster planning, implementation, or assessment activities. Not only does this render them invisible, it also conceals their needs and lack of protection during times of disaster.

The goal of this project, supported by  Kaleidoscope Trust, the Commonwealth Equality Network, and UK Aid, was to carry out research and advocacy for SOGIE safety and security in times of disaster, including

1. Research on SOGIE diverse experiences in times of disaster
2. Research on awareness of SOGIE diverse needs among humanitarian and disaster response organizations
3. Development of a Vanuatu- and Pacific-context specific guide to SOGIE inclusion in times of disasters
4. Working with the research and guide, advocate for SOGIE inclusive standards, data collection, and guidelines during times of disaster

The project seeks to raise capacity in humanitarian actors in Vanuatu and the Pacific, for effective SOGIE inclusion in times of disasters, ensuring access to aid and protection of safety and healthy.

The project was carried out by VPride, the only LGBTQI organisation in Vanuatu. For the past 10+ years, VPride has worked on LGBTQ advocacy through building relations with government ministries,  civil society actors, and providing  LGBTQI awareness training .

This report first reviews the legal context for SOGIE inclusion, including the humanitarian charter and standards. Next, it presents global research on SOGIE issues during times of disaster. This is followed by Vanuatu research conducted with humanitarian actors on their policies and practices, along with research on the experiences of SOGIE diverse people in Vanuatu at the time of TC Harold. The last part of the report presents a comprehensive guide and assessment tool, designed to assist humanitarian actors in providing more effective SOGIE inclusion in their planning, implementation, and evaluation of disaster response activities.

## 2. Legal Context for SOGIE Inclusion

Vanuatu currently has very little legal protection in place for diverse SOGIE people. Since Independence in 1980, however, Vanuatu joined the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations, and became a signatory to a number of key Agreements and Conventions. Many of these directly or indirectly provide for SOGIE rights to inclusion and protection. In addition, the Humanitarian Charter and Standards provide essential guidelines and an accountability framework for all humanitarian actors.

## 2.1 International Principles and Commitments

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates, "all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights" (article 1), and "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Article) [10].

While the Declaration does not specifically mention SOGIE diversity, in 2011 the United Nations Human Rights Council recognized that discrimination and violence on the basis of diverse SOGIE violates human rights. Furthermore, 34 countries supported a 2020 statement at the Human Rights Council, recognizing that people with "diverse sex characteristics face discrimination in all areas of life", and called on the Council and national governments to address these violations and their root causes [11].

### Yogyakarta Principles

The Yogyakarta Principles were developed in 2006 and address a broad range of international human rights standards and their application to SOGIE issues. On 10 Nov. 2017 a panel of experts published additional principles expanding on the original document reflecting developments in international human rights law and practice, The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10. The new document also contains 111 'additional state obligations', related to areas such as torture, asylum, privacy, health and the protection of human rights defenders. The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 are a universal guide to human rights which affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply [12].

### UN OHCHR Born Free and Equal

In *BORN FREE AND EQUAL: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Human Rights Law[13]*, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights *(OHCHR)* notes that "(t)he case for extending the same rights to LGBT persons as those enjoyed by everyone rests on two fundamental principles that underpin international human rights law: equality and non-discrimination. The opening words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are unequivocal: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Therefore, the protection of people on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity does not require the creation of new rights or special rights for LGBT people. Rather, it requires enforcement of the universally applicable guarantee of nondiscrimination in the enjoyment of all rights"[14]

The document sets out five core legal obligations that member States have towards LGBT persons:

1. Protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence
2. Prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of LGBT persons
3. Decriminalize homosexuality
4. Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
5. Respect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly

These obligations are guaranteed by international standards, to which Vanuatu is a signatory, including articles 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 19 and 20 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, articles 2, 6, 7, 9, 17, 19, 21, 22 and 26 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, articles 1 and 2 of the *Convention against Torture*, and article 2 of *Convention of the Rights of the Child[15]*.

Vanuatu is also a signatory to *the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),* which promotes the equality of women and specifies legally binding steps that must be taken to ensure the human rights and equality of women in private and public life. While the Convention does not explicitly include sexual orientation, it states that discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Global Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals are the overarching framework for international development. The UNDP notes that "(i)n September 2015, 193 Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the global framework for efforts to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change by 2030.

Central to this agenda is the pledge that *no one should be left behind.* Achieving these goals will be impossible if LGBTI people, like other marginalized people, are not included. [16]

The 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain multiple targets of relevance to LGBT human rights. SDG 5 calls on states to take action towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, which by definition includes lesbian, bisexual and trans women and girls. SDG 10 on reduced inequalities urges states to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, and to eliminate discriminatory laws and promote appropriate legislation. SDG 16 on peace and justice calls for promotion of the rule of law and equal access

Achieving the SDGs requires good, solid data and evidence-based research to inform the legal, policy and programmatic frameworks needed to achieve results. Currently, however, there is a huge gap in the global data available on the inclusion of LGBTI people. To fill this gap, and as a contribution to support the implementation of Agenda 2030, on 10 December 2015, UNDP announced its commitment to lead the development of an LGBTI Inclusion Index that can inform evidence-based development strategies to advance the inclusion and rights of LGBTI people"[17].Among other things, this commitment resulted in the publication of *Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* [18] .

Key dimensions of the UNDP index include political and civic participation, economic well-being, personal security and violence, health, and education. To allow for measurement of progress, the Index includes a set of 51 specific indicators in these areas[19].

Rights throughout the Commonwealth

A number of provisions of the Commonwealth Charter are directly relevant to SOGIE or LGBT human rights[20]. Article 2 provides that member states are committed to equality and the protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all without discrimination on any grounds. Article 4 accepts that diversity and understanding multiple identities are fundamental to the Commonwealth's principles. Article 12 recognises that gender equality is essential for human development and basic human rights. Multiple domestic courts in the Commonwealth have confirmed that criminalisation of and discrimination against LGBT people violate constitutional human rights norms. More details are provided in *Speaking out: The rights of LGBTI citizens from across the Commonwealth* .[21]

Pacific Region Context

The Pacific region commitments provide another important context for LGBT rights. The Pacific Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (PPA) has advocated for women's rights since 1994[22]. In 2017, Ministers for Women endorsed *The Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018-2030*[23].

The PPA vision is that "(a)ll people, *of all genders of all diversities*, enjoy their fundamental human rights, are empowered and benefit equally from development outcomes in all areas of their lives" (emphasis added). The PPA also:

- "provides a roadmap for achieving gender equality and enhancing the well-being of all women and girls of all diversities in all their diversity, inclusive of young women, older women, rural women, women with disabilities, women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and indigenous women

- supports action on national, regional and international gender equality commitments made by Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), particularly under the Pacific Leaders' Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- guides PICTs, regional agencies and development partners in prioritising strategic approaches to achieve gender equality"[24].

## 2.2 Vanuatu 2030 and Vanuatu Law

Vanuatu 2030

Vanuatu has developed its National Sustainable Development Plan, better known as the *Vanuatu 2030 The People's Plan.* Like many such documents, LGBT and other vulnerable groups are not mentioned specifically, but the plan does use inclusive language. Of particular relevance is the Society Pillar, which seeks to "ensure we maintain a vibrant cultural identity underpinning a peaceful, just and inclusive society that is supported by responsive and capable institutions, delivering quality services to *all citizens*" (emphasis added).

Within the Society Pillar, three goals are particularly relevant to SOGIE inclusion

- o Goal 2: *Quality Education*: An inclusive, equitable and quality education system with life-long *learning for all.*
- o Goal 3: *Quality Health Care*: A healthy population that enjoys a high quality of physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being
- o Goal 4: *Social Inclusion*: An inclusive society which upholds human dignity and where the rights of all Ni-Vanuatu including women, youth, the elderly and vulnerable groups are supported, protected and promoted in our legislation and institutions

Vanuatu Law and Human Rights

In 2011, Vanuatu was 1 of 96 UN member states that signed the "*Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*". The statement includes condemnation of violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization and prejudice based on SOGIE that undermine personal integrity and dignity. It also condemns killings and executions, torture, arbitrary arrest, and deprivation of economic, social, and cultural rights on those grounds.

In November 2016 at the UN General Assembly, Vanuatu voted in support of the mandate of the *Independent Expert on Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*. An independent expert's role would be to assess the implementation of international human rights instruments with a view to overcome violence and discrimination against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity and identify and address the root causes of violence and discrimination.

In spite of taking these positive steps towards the recognition and protection of SOGIE human rights in the UN arena, Vanuatu has very few legal protections in place, based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Vanuatu *Constitution* offers general human rights protections but does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. While consensual same-sex activity is legal in Vanuatu under the Penal Code, the only prohibition on "sexual preference" discrimination is in the *Teaching Service Act 2013.* The *National Youth Authority Act* is the only bill that recognizes persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity by affirming that "youth means any person aged between 12 to 30 years of age, including those with disabilities and of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity."

In January 2019, Vanuatu underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR)in Geneva[25], The UPR is a unique process created by the UN General Assembly and involves the review of the human rights situations of all UN Member States once every 4.5 years. It is a state driven process and an opportunity to for each state to identify key human rights issues and challenges as well as to periodically declare what actions it has taken to improve human rights situations and fulfil human rights obligations.

Vpride provided input into a report prepared by the Kaleidoscope Human Rights Foundation for the United Nations Human Rights Council regarding the rights of SOGIE diverse people in Vanuatu. The report highlighted a lack of Vanuatu laws and policies that aim to reduce stigma on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. that protect persons against hate crimes and violence and that prohibit discrimination in employment, education, health care, housing and the provision of goods and services on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Recommendations from the UPR to Vanuatu included an amendment to the constitution to incorporate the prohibition of discrimination based on sex and gender, to put in place a comprehensive strategy to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes and to put in place measures to eliminate discrimination and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, including anti-discrimination measures and awareness-raising campaigns,

While Vanuatu accepted many recommendations to strengthen its overall human rights policies and implementation mechanisms, it noted but did not accept the specific recommendations mentioned above. The next UPR of Vanuatu will take place in 2024.

Currently, there are no SOGIE data collected through the Vanuatu census or any other national data collection tools. SOGIE diversity is also not included in most of the INGO data collection tools, nor in any standard police, education, or health data recording. SOGIE diversity is not a part of the Vanuatu Gender Equality Policy nor is SOGIE diversity included in any disaster planning or assessment reports.

## 2.3 The Humanitarian Charter

For humanitarian actors – be they government agencies, international non-government organizations (INGOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs)- , the Humanitarian Charter is of particular importance[26]. Developed by the Sphere Project, in collaboration with leading NGOs, interested donor governments and UN agencies, the Humanitarian Charter, its Protection Principles, and its Minimum Standards provide ethical and pragmatic guidelines for humanitarian action around the world.

The humanitarian imperative is the foundation of the Charter. It emphasizes the rights of all people – including those of SOGIE diversity- to humanitarian assistance and support:

> The Humanitarian Charter expresses our shared conviction as humanitarian agencies that all people affected by disaster of conflict have a right to receive protection and assistance to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity.

> We believe that the principles described in this Humanitarian Charter are universal, applying to all those affected by disaster of conflict wherever they may be, and to all those who seek to assist them or provide for their security.

> These principles are reflected in international law, but derive their force ultimately from the fundamental moral principle of *humanity*: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

> Based on this priciple, we affirm the primacy of the *humanitarian imperative*: that action should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster and conflict, and that nothing should override this principle. [27]

> We offer our services as humanitarian agencies on the basis of the principle of humanity and the humanitarian imperative, recognizing the rights of all people affected by disaster or conflict. We summarize these rights as follows:
>
> > ➢ The right to life with dignity
> > ➢ The right to receive humanitarian assistance
> > ➢ The right to protection and security[28].

Based on these general beliefs and principles, the Charter outlines four basic protection principles that inform all humanitarian action:

1. Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions
2. Ensure people's access to impartial assistance – in proportion to need and without discrimination
3. Protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and corecion
4. Assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies and recover from the effects of abuse.[29]

Each of the protection principles is accompanied by specific application guidance which has been incorporated in our guideline document in section 6. As we shall show in the following sections, however, in spite of the legal context and the guidance from the Humanitarian Charter, the rights of SOGIE people during times of disaster have not been sufficiently recognized and as a result, humanitarian actors efectively, albeit often unintentionally, violate the humanitarian imperative and each of the protection principles.
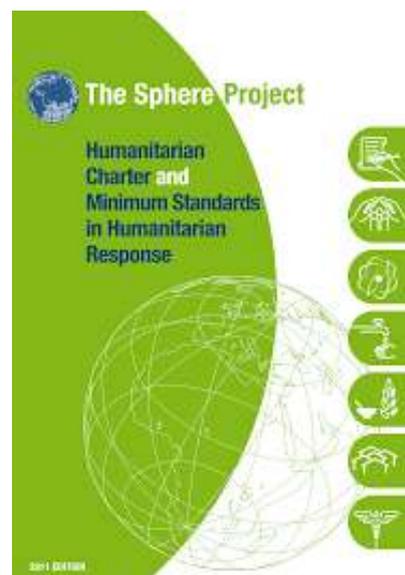
## 3. Research on SOGIE-diverse inclusion in times of disasters

The adversity, discrimination, and exclusion faced by people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGIE or LGBTIQ+) in daily life are compounded during times of crisis, and yet little guidance exists for their inclusion in humanitarian response. One study identified several issues specific to gender and sex minorities, including the loss of safe spaces, stigmatization, physical and verbal abuse, and the failure of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies to adequately address the specific needs of these minorities, leading to further exclusion and marginalization[30]. Others[31] added that the vulnerability of these groups is intersectional, made worse by other factors such as race, class, income and dis/ability. As shown in the UNDP graphic here, lack of data and documentation continues to present a major challenge.
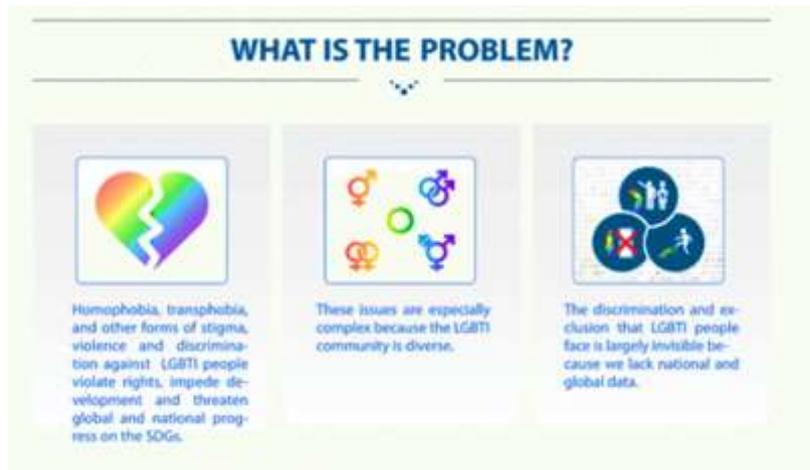


Furthermore , as noted in the 2021 Edge Effect scoping study, "gaps exist in social protection support for people with diverse SOGIESC, including cash-based assistance programs. As per the title of this report (a quote from an interview): "We don't do a lot for them specifically" [32].

**Prejudice and Discrimination in times of emergency**

During an emergency, SOGIE diverse people are subject to the same stressors as every other person, but their adverse conditions are compounded by a number of other factors:

> "Often, the collapse of their normal coping mechanisms, structures (such as LGBTIQ+ community centers), and loss of income from informal economies are not captured. As a result, humanitarian response often continues to perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of LGBTIQ+ populations.  Practices such as binary gender-segregated shelter and sanitation facilities, which require identification that legally affirms one's gender identity to access aid, and narrow definitions of the 'households' that form the basis of aid distributions or needs assessments, make the process of seeking aid exclusionary, humiliating, and harmful."[33]

Marginalised groups often develop their own support systems and coping mechanisms using any available resources they have. However, common ways to improve resilience such as building family and school relationships and community bonding often are not accessible for SOGIE diverse people due to social rejection[34].

In addition, "the consequences of discriminatory attitudes, combined with exclusionary policies, are significant barriers to accessing disaster relief, directly affecting health and wellbeing. …(T)he actual experience of discrimination is not required to develop a reluctance to access support, everyday experiences of discrimination are sufficient"[35].

During and after disasters, LGBTIQ+ people are at high risk of increased violence, destruction of safe spaces, collapse of informal economic networks, forcibly being outed, exclusion from disaster relief services. "People with diverse SOGIESC often experience harassment and abuse from family members, other displaced people, host community members and officials, and may also be targeted due to their reluctance to report, because of fears this will lead to inaction or further abuse"[36]. LGBTIQ+ people may be forced from their family homes, and those who are no, may receive diminished support within their own households.

Transgender people are especially vulnerable during a disaster. Generally, 47 percent of trans people have been sexually assaulted, and their rate of suicide is nine times higher than the general population[37][38]. These incidents drastically increase during disasters, where the social structures and mechanisms they use to keep them safe disintegrate. In addition, transgender people often don't have identification that matches their gender identity, which can leave them trapped or at risk in disaster zones:[39]"

Studies of different crises and their aftermaths[40] found that not only does societal prejudice increase during times of disaster, the victims of this discrimination are often blamed for the disaster itself. Conservative religious leaders and others often invoke the concept of divine retribution, where human suffering is seen as a consequence of sin, [and] found a measurable increase in negative attitudes towards homosexuals after disaster events around the world. For instance, after the Haiti earthquake[41], the gay community was accused of 'calling down the wrath of God'. Other studies [42] found that some faith leaders held discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTIQ people, 'legitimizing hateful and violent behaviour'. These issues were also shown in our own research in Section 4.

Under the stress of both the disaster itself and increased hostility from those around them, it is not uncommon for LGBTIQ people to re-closet so as not to attract unwanted attention. There have been documented cases of people significantly altering their behaviour in order to access support and maintain safety. Some men adopted a 'more masculine demeanor' to avoid harassment and increase their access to services[43], and lesbian couples presented themselves as sisters in order to access support[44]. When members of the LGBTIQ community find themselves in a threatening or unsafe environment, they understandably feel that they must conceal their identity, so as to avoid harassment or confrontation.

It should also be noted that SOGIE diverse people often support disaster relief efforts in a number of significant ways. Some studies[45] observed that they were able to perform tasks traditionally assigned to both men and women, provided assistance to other people, and could allocate more time to relief activities (being less likely to care for children).

**SOGIE diversity and Humanitarian Response**

SOGIE diverse people remain excluded at all different levels of humanitarian response, which makes it difficult to create a clear picture of this tragic situation. Recent publications by UNWomen and Edge Effect note that there are "few incentives and little pressure for humanitarian and DRR organizations to undertake the internal transformation or external engagement required for diverse SOGIESC inclusion. In the absence of incentives or pressure, busy and risk-averse organizations may continue to put off substantive work on diverse SOGIESC inclusion"[46].

A study conducted in Victoria, Australia, identified key issues, such as discrimination in EM service provision, increased risk of harassment and abuse, risk of violence in evacuation and relief centres, stigmatization, homophobic/transphobic attitudes in the EM workplace, and lack of inclusive policies and practices:[47] As will be shown in later sections, these issues were also found in our own study.

Without definitive guidance regarding SOGIESC inclusive disaster relief, "development staff often overlook gender identity and sexuality concerns because they cause unease across different cultural contexts[48] . Thus, SOGIE diversity continues to be routinely excluded from reporting frameworks, data collection, and statistical definitions as it does not fit within a heteronormative framework.  The Oxfam infographic shown here summarizes the main issues and challenges[49].

Edge Effect's *Integrating Gender into Humanitarian Action* report notes that:

> Humanitarian needs and disaster risk assessments, as well as humanitarian response monitoring, generally do not disaggregate by SOGIE, which means data is often scarce. Recent experiences of LGBTIQ+ persons in emergencies indicate that their needs, risks, voices, and capacities are not adequately accounted for and addressed in both disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action.[50]
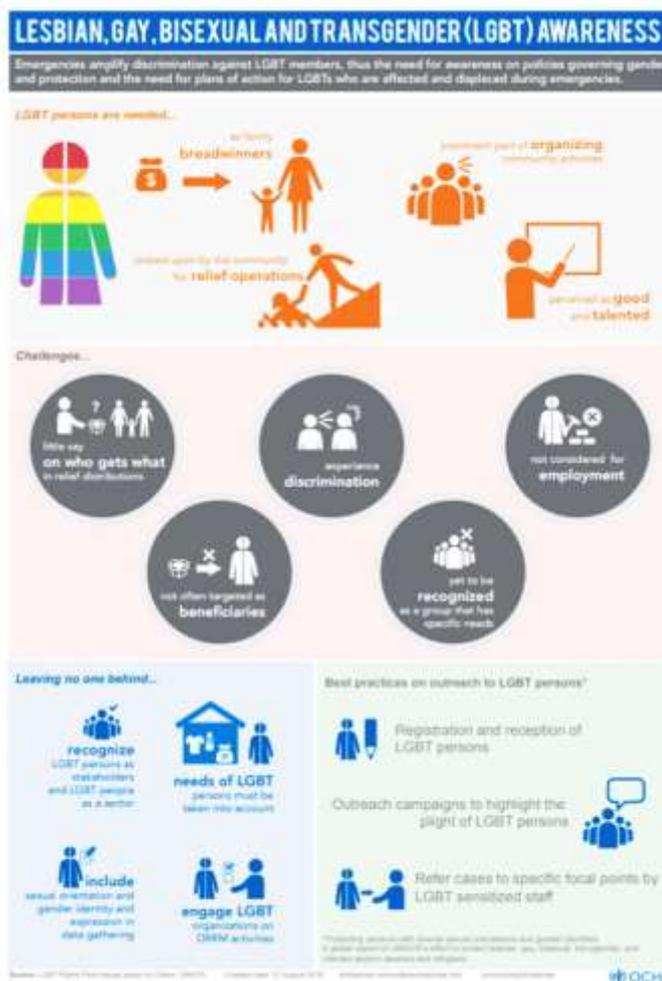
ALNAP, in its 2018 *State of the Humanitarian System* report, describes the current humanitarian aid structure as "a system that is not good at understanding or addressing the specific vulnerabilities of different groups of people in different contexts". This report makes note of a consistent failure "to identify the actual vulnerabilities of different groups of people within a specific context", and that "[when] differences within a population are addressed, this is often through predetermined activities for predetermined 'vulnerable groups[51].

As a result, people with diverse SOGIESC are amongst those groups whose vulnerability is regularly overlooked. UN Women *The Only Way Is Up* details how frameworks promoting inclusivity within the humanitarian sector provide little or no specific support for diverse SOGIESC inclusion. Needs assessments, funding calls, program design and implementation, and evaluations and 'lessons learned' often proceed as if people with diverse SOGIESC do not exist. While there are genuine contexts in which people with diverse SOGIESC are hard-to-reach, and where do-no-harm considerations are profound, organizations without policy guidance, tools adaptation, staff training or community partnerships are likely to struggle to find ways of meeting the humanitarian imperative in safe, effective and dignified ways. Summary recommendations from the report are detailed in the table below.

| Summary of Findings from *The Only Way is Up* | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Humanitarian assessments across responses and within sectoral areas routinely omit diversity of SOGIESC or mention SOGIESC in passing without providing any substantive guidance for response planning. | 8. Survival and recovery is harder for people with diverse SOGIESC because of challenges they face building dignified and resilient lives. DRR and resilient development programs need to support people with diverse SOGIESC before | 14. There are many barriers for diverse SOGIESC civil society organizations to have closer structural relationships with the humanitarian and DRR systems. These include funding for CSOs, capacity |

2. DRR reporting and statistical data gathering in longer term development contexts also routinely fail to include people with diverse SOGIESC, due to the absence of SOGIESC in DRR reporting frameworks, statistical definitions, data collection practices, and societal discrimination.

3. Humanitarian planning documents also routinely omit people with diverse SOGIESC. The general commitment to meet the needs of 'other vulnerable groups' usually does not lead to the inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC, because of the systemic nature of discrimination, violence and exclusion that they face and inertia within the humanitarian and DRR systems.

4. DRR laws, systems and planning documents at the national level routinely omit people with diverse SOGIESC.

5. Humanitarian and DRR programs routinely leave unmet the specific and acute needs of people with diverse SOGIESC needs. People with diverse SOGIESC have needs across many thematic areas. While it is natural that gender and social inclusion staff, SRHR staff and safety and protection clusters pay attention to diverse SOGIESC issues, specialists in education, livelihoods, shelter and housing, WASH and other sectors also need to address diversity of SOGIESC in their standards, training and programs.

6. While advocates for diverse SOGIESC inclusion can learn from the journeys of other inclusion efforts such as those in the domains of gender, age and disability, it is likely that the journey toward diverse SOGIESC inclusion will be harder. Systems thinking helps advocates of diverse SOGIESC inclusion to understand how the humanitarian and DRR systems - as complex and adaptive systems -

disasters, conflict and complex emergencies take their toll.

9. Failures at the global level within humanitarian and DRR sectors are partly to blame for the limited progress on diverse SOGIESC inclusion. While high-level processes do not guarantee change at programs level, the absence of focused attention at the global level sends the message that discrimination and violence on the basis, of diversity of SOGIESC is a low priority.

10. There is a need to recognize and address diversity within the range of people with diverse SOGIESC. Research into the experiences of people with diverse SOGIESC, including this report, has failed to adequately address the experiences of cisgender women with diverse sexual orientation, trans men and intersex people. Where diversity of SOGIESC is addressed, the focus is usually on diversity of gender identity and expressions; societal stigma means that diversity of sexual orientation and diversity of sex characteristics remain off the agenda.

11. Humanitarian and DRR organizations have not developed the capacity to address the rights, needs and strengths of people with diverse SOGIESC, nor have they invested in training for their staff, or reviewed their tools and ways of workings to ensure fitness for purpose for working with people with diverse SOGIESC.

12. People with diverse SOGIESC who experience discrimination, harassment and exclusion often do not trust reporting mechanisms or trust that aid organizations will address their issues. This leaves people with diverse SOGIESC isolated and fending for themselves.

13. When diverse SOGIESC civil society organizations have closer

strengthening opportunities for CSOs, awareness and interest of organizations in thematic areas aside from gender-social inclusion-protection, and ways of working within the humanitarian system that exclude outsiders.

15. Discriminatory laws, government policies and programs, and societal discrimination have a major impact on DRR and humanitarian experiences of people with diverse SOGIESC, and upon the willingness and/or opportunity of DRR and humanitarian organizations to safely address the rights, needs and strengths of people with diverse SOGIESC.

16. Discrimination by religious institutions impacts people with diverse SOGIESC personally, for example being excluded from faith communities or being blamed for disasters. However, it also leads governments, international organizations and general community members to avoid addressing diverse SOGIESC inclusion issues

17. Finding safe spaces and being amongst other people with diverse SOGIESC - for example in salons - is of great importance for people with diverse SOGIESC in everyday life. However, in crises, especially if people are displaced to community shelters or camps, safe spaces are very hard to find, leaving people with diverse SOGIESC isolated or at risk of violence and harassment.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| resist change. Effective mapping of these factors, along with flexible, contextual and adaptive interventions and regular monitoring is likely to accelerate change.<br><br>7. Diversity of SOGIESC is poorly addressed in humanitarian and DRR global frameworks and standards for inclusion, protection and accountability to affected populations. | structural relationships with the humanitarian and DRR systems there are signs of progress on diverse SOGIESC inclusion. This takes the form of increased service delivery and community organizing by diverse SOGIESC organizations, and increased momentum amongst established humanitarian and DRR | 18. Family and community acceptance - or even toleration - significantly improves experiences of people with diverse SOGIESC before, during and after crises. However, without it, people with diverse SOGIESC tend to have worse experiences, with family and community members being amongst the perpetrators of violence and harassment. |

As we also report in our own research in Section 4 "[t]he general commitment to meet the needs of 'other vulnerable groups' usually does not lead to the inclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC, because of the systemic nature of discrimination, violence and exclusion that they face"[52]

Without an explicit SOGIE inclusive approach to disaster relief, state actors and NGOs implicitly endanger LGBTIQ+ people during times of crisis in a variety of ways that may otherwise be invisible to the organization itself. As shown in Edge Effect's *Diverse SOGIESC Spectrum*, this in effect means the activities of humanitarian actors can in fact be <u>harmful</u>, thereby violating the humanitarian protection principles discussed in Section 2.
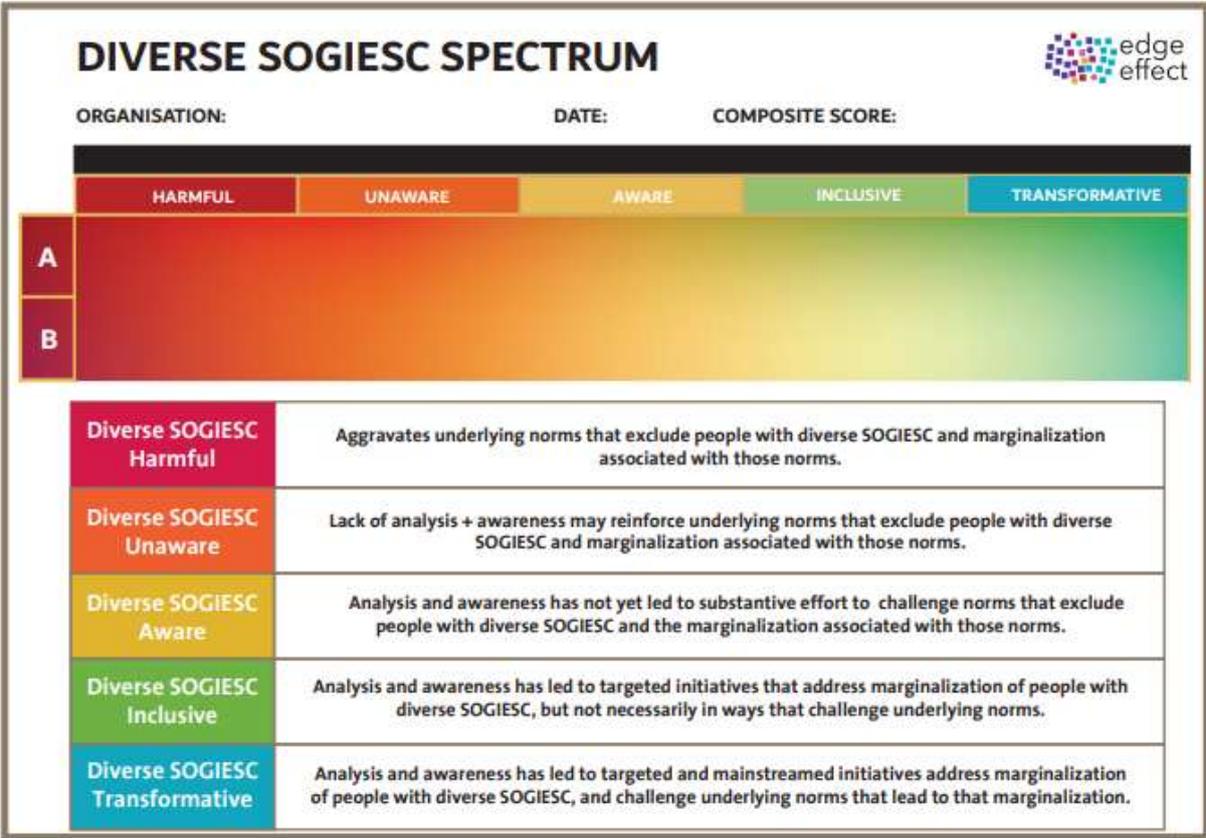


Above: Edge Effect's Diverse SOGIESC Spectrum (in this version with rows for two indicators).

This is further explained in the next Edge Effect visual, that outlines causes, and impact, based on where the humanitarian organization sits on the awareness and action continuum.



| | HOSTILE | UNAWARE | INACTIVE | INCLUSIVE | TRANSFORMATIVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **IMPACT** | Norms-based discrimination and exclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC is exacerbated. | Norms-based discrimination and exclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC is reinforced. | Norms-based discrimination and exclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC is maintained. | Norms-based discrimination and exclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC is ameliorated. | Norms-based discrimination and exclusion of people with diverse SOGIESC is subverted. |
| **CAUSES** | The organization is aware of its negative impact on people with diverse SOGIESC but either chooses not to change its ways of working, or actively chooses to discriminate. | The organization has no awareness of the discrimination or exclusion experienced by people with diverse SOGIESC, or how its ways of working are implicitly discriminatory or exclusionary. | The organization has some awareness of the discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with diverse SOGIESC, but is not taking active or substantive steps to address symptoms or causes. | The organization is aware of the discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with diverse SOGIESC. It chooses to act on that awareness, but only to address the symptoms and not the causes. | The organization is aware of the discrimination and exclusion experienced by people with diverse SOGIESC. It chooses to act on that awareness, and addresses the causes as well as the symptoms. |

The systemic factors described present a substantial challenge to inclusive disaster response, not only for the relief agencies. The everyday experiences of SOGIESC discrimination provide a sufficient deterrent to seeking disaster assistance from state actors and NGOS alike[53]. As articulated in UN Women's Rapid Assessment Tool, people with diverse SOGIESC may be "unable to access safe shelter… chose not to use GBV services fearing potential privacy breaches… [or] feel compelled to undertake survival sex to gain access to aid supplies".

The consequences of discriminatory attitudes, combined with exclusionary policies, are significant barriers to accessing disaster relief, directly affecting health and wellbeing. Understandably, SOGIE people are often reluctant to engage with these agencies, and in turn, state actors and NGOs remain blind to the violence, discrimination and isolation experienced by SOGIE people, even as they provide disaster relief.

To link the global findings discussed to the Vanuatu situation, the following two sections will present original research that confirms the absence of SOGIESC inclusive disaster response in Vanuatu.

Section 4 offers a detailed analysis of interviews conducted with representatives of 10 State agencies and INGOs providing disaster relief on the topic of SOGIESC inclusion. Section 5 shares the stories of numerous LGBTIQ+ disaster victims across Vanuatu, and the hardships they experienced in the aftermath of TC Harold.

# 4. Organisational Survey Report

## 4.1 Summary

As was discussed in section 2, SOGIE diverse people face significant barriers to inclusion in many societies around the world, despite the significant shifts in legal protection and general acceptance in recent years. During times of crisis and disaster, existing prejudices, which manifest in isolation, harassment and violence, among other things, are often heighted as the normal rhythm of daily life is disrupted.

As was discussed in section 2, the increased suffering of LGBT people during crisis is often invisible to the agencies which provide emergency relief, as they are frequently unaware of the special needs of marginalized communities amidst the effort to provide emergency relief to the general population.

 In order to test this locally, we carried out interviews with a number of organizations involved in disaster relief in Vanuatu. The interviews aimed aimed to assess the current state of LGBT inclusion during crisis by answering 15 questions, regarding their awareness of LGBT issues and needs during emergencies, organizational policies and practices, and experiences during emergencies.

Organizations interviewed included the following INGOs, NGOs, and government departments:

1. Care International
2. Oxfam
3. Red Cross
4. Save the Children
5. World Vision
6. Vanuatu Family Health Association
7. and Youth Challenge Vanuatu
8. International Organisation for Migration
9. Vanuatu National Disaster Management Office
10. Ministry of Health

These organisations are the major players in the provision of emergency relief services in the major urban center of Port Vila, as well as on the outer islands of Pentecost, Santo, Ambae, Tanna and others. Their services broadly include the operation of evacuation centers, aid coordination and tracking, communication and logistics coordination, provision of WASH support as well as provision of material aid such as hygiene kits, kitchen kits, tents, dry goods and medicine. While none of the organisations specified LGBT people as a target community, some did focus on providing services to women and young girls, people with disabilities, and rural populations.

For most respondents, SOGIE inclusion meant "treating everyone the same" or "treating them like everyone else", rather than taking action to meet the unique needs of SOGIE people during disaster situations. Many believed that their organizations' existing Gender Protection and Safeguarding frameworks already provided sufficient coverage. However, they were generally receptive and open to training on how to better support SOGIE people during disasters.

Respondents were generally aware of discrimination against SOGIE people among the general population, and mentioned encountering online harassment on platforms such as Facebook. However, there was little to no account of actual incidences of discrimination against SOGIE people in times of disaster or in daily life in general.

Frequently, respondents cited their own organization's code of conduct as a deterrent to workplace harassment, and only one respondent reported witnessing homophobic harassment at work. Regarding the question of privacy protection, respondents agreed that this was an important issue, but perceived it as something that was difficult to achieve in practice due to the lack of anonymity in small island communities.

All respondents answered positively in regards to their willingness to collaborate with other agencies in improving their provision of SOGIE-inclusive services. Although specific policies or measures were not mentioned, organisations such as Oxfam, Wan Smol Bag, VPride, and the existing gender protection cluster were identified as focal points for collaboration.

Overall, the results of the survey indicated an absence of awareness and consideration for the needs of LGBT people in the provision of emergency services in Vanuatu. Despite this lack of awareness, discrimination and harassment *do* occur during disaster, as evidenced in the narrative account of LGBT community members during the recent TC Harold, presented later in this report.

Hopefully, by bringing these accounts forward, and providing the surveyed organisations with policy recommendations, assessment tools, and specific guidelines, they will be encouraged in developing an awareness of the need to include SOGIE diverse people as a vulnerable group, develop appropriate policies and practices, and give a new and improved expression of the humanitarian charter and protection principles.

## 4.2 Detailed Results

The first set of questions focused on people's awareness of LGBT issues and needs during emergencies.

*1.      LGBTI people face more barriers to support services and resources during an emergency than other people -  Agree/Disagree*
When asked *whether LGBT people faced additional barriers to accessing services and resources during an emergency*, most respondents disagreed with this statement. They explained that they believed that, because their organization does not discriminate in their provision of service, such barriers do not exist. Respondents often repeated that LGBT people were treated the same as everyone else during disaster:

- o   Health services can be provided to marginalized groups and everyone has the right to access the support services"
- o   In our experience in communities, people have fear of others but they know that this is part in the groups we work with
- o   We treat them the same but sometimes people do identify them as LGBT
- o   It does not matter on what sexual orientation they have but we are here to support.
- o   We are inclusive no matter in what status
- o   We treat everyone equal

Some respondents did perceive additional barriers to accessing services/ They attributed this phenomenon to rural communities being less "civilized" or "socialized" in their general attitude towards LGBT people generally. They also noted:

- o   The SOGIE community has more barriers against them …more like a blockage especially during the emergency crisis. They are already neglected part of the community and during emergencies they become more vulnerable.
- o   There is lack of knowledge of implementation in place to break the barriers:
- o   There is awareness but  more is needed
- o   (Barriers are) due to discrimination which may result in reluctancy to seeking aid
- o   Depending on who  is in the group and who looks after the group
- o   It happens but  it depends on cultural norms andin  the remote area when we talk about civilised people it means that they understand

*2.    DURING or AFTER an emergency there is a greater risk of harassment and abuse for LGBTI people than other people – Agree/Disagree*

Most respondents agreed with this statement. A few respondents reported having witnessed such mistreatment of LGBT people:

- I agree because during times of disaster, I found out that a lot of harassment towards the LGBTIQ people in evacuation centre
- I agree but I don't have this experience for myself I just know from other workout in Vanuatu about this and in other countries
- Plenty of people in community have a lack of information about LGBTIQ sothere will be a greater risk of harassment and abuse towards this people
- The harassment and abuse are hard to control however we can encourage youth to avoid such behaviour and treat everyone equals and with respect

Some respondents disagreed or felt it was "not serious". This is quite common in Vanuatu, where micro aggressions are not recognized and therefore not counted as discrimination:

- -I worked with our community gender and equality projects during the cyclone Pam –I saw little things but it was just an attitude problem
- I have never met with the LGBTIQ but I have worked with one person in our community and one of our colleagues made him feel ashamed in front of people during the swimming in the seashore or rivers. He always got angry with me because I was to lead them to the community but most of the time a normal man loves to makes jokes towards the LGBTIQ and some of these jokes can make them angry.

*3.    DURING or AFTER AN EMERGENCY, LGBTI people have the same needs as everyone else – Agree/Disagree*

As with the earlier question, the general response was that "everyone is the same" and that a general policy addresses the needs of everyone. As a result, there is little awareness of specific issues and needs, such as gender-neutral toilet facilities in emergency shelters, special protective measures for LGBT individuals and families, and preventing disruption of hormone therapy for people in transition.

Those who agreed noted:

- The same needs cover everyone
- LGBTIQ have the same needs as everyone else and are entitle to the full assistance and  relief
- We work with the communities, we have to make sure that everyone is equal and gets the same support. We include everyone as long as they arepart of community.
- If an LBTQ is part of a family of 5, they can also benefit from the aid support
- We didn't get any information about their needs. Maybe in the future when there is the increase in number of LGBTIQ, their needs will considered
- We don't give specific consideration to LGBTIQ - however, we include them with everyone else as part of the groups we are working with
- The needs are the same but they have fear

Those who disagreed noted:

- Some of their needs are different from the other people e.g. privacy protection . Everyone has needs but we focus only on children and families
- They have special needs and a policy is in process but as of now the policy does not acknowledge that they have special needs
- Maybe some additional needs
- Maybe the same basic needs but in terms of protection, that could be more complicated

Data collection and identification were identified as an issue, but related problems were not clearly recognized such as those related to classification and protection of privacy. Some respondents

recognized that binary gender (male/female) designation during EM reporting may be the cause, but they were not clear on what would constitute an inclusive alternative to this practice:

- Usually, it should be considered before or after it should be. The reason why BEFORE, it is because this the way we collect data, and DURING is we can include them to move into an evacuation centre then AFTER, we will know their needs.
- If they identify them to us and relate their concerns, we can address their needs
- LGBTIQ can get aid but their needs must be identified

The next set of questions focused on organizational awareness, practices, services and policies.

*4.      I have concerns about my organisation providing good service to LGBTI people – Agree/Disagree*
The results here were mixed, with most again stating that everyone was treated the same. Some did acknowledge the need for training to make sure everyone is included and that they were aware that more needs to be done. Ensuring that there is representation and voice was also mentioned:

- representation in the Gender Protection Cluster is really important because the information comes from the GPC up to the national level.  It is great your organization is making sure that the voice of LGBTIQ can be heard and good services can be provided
- this awareness you guys are doing, it is best to do more because  people need to understand, e.g. a  facebook page for LGBTIQ so that  normal people get more awareness about the LGBTIQ

*5.      My colleagues have a good understanding of the special needs/circumstances of LGBTI people in the context of an emergency – Agree/Disagree*

Most respondents acknowledged the need for additional information and training:

- Those working in response recovery  do have but the other teams, not really
- Some so but in different levels
- It is best to have an SOGIE workshop by inviting more than 2 LGBTIQ by sharing stories and feelings towards our colleagues so that they can understand them well so that we can include them and working together as team
- There are specific reports related to Gender and Protection or , but most of the time they report back to their cluster. Sometimes they provide a general report  to us but we only get the number o fmen and women.
- It come through policies and the guidelines on response
- There is a minimum standard but if there's a command for what to do then they able to follow the chain of command
- They are not educated on the special need of LGBTIQ People but it is apparent that more understanding is needed
- (Our organization) needs more awareness about SOGIE
- We still need more work to educate our staff on that because some of them heard about LGBTQI but they don't know what is stand for but we are only aware of Gay and Lesbian. They need to learn more on that. As an organization it is important for us to know all this information because our programs need to be inclusive.

*6.      My organisation addresses the needs of LGBTI people in an emergency – Agree/Disagree*

Some respondents felt that their organization effectively addressed these needs, but again, grouping them under the same needs as everyone else. Most respondents acknowledged  that there was a need for change:

- More of basic needs rather than special needs
- A lot of things we are addressing are part of Gender Protection Cluster. The guidelines, documents, and policies cover harassment and sexual abuses and all of this. We have to make sure that the staff signs these. If we go out to the fields, all harassment is prohibited and that include the LGBTIQ. There is no specific things that relate to LGBTIQ.

- In the GPC , this needs to be addressed so that (our organization) knows about and can address their needs. We do have trainings on how to run the EM operation centre by working together with our clusters. (VPride) needs to be part of these trainings. We will directly contact you guys to request your support.
- A lot of things still need to be learned
- In the project we are working on, we are making sure that all the community voices are heard
- Our emergency management plan covers every level of gender – they are also part of the GPT which we work with
- Yes, only if a SOGIE members are found in their target group of family of 5 and of course they are entitled to the support and assistance but to not specifically address to LGBTIQ+ need,

7. *My organisation has policies, procedures, training sessions on EM for LGBTI people Agree/Disagree*

When asked if there were specific SOGIE related policies within their organization, one organization said they had policies, another said they had policies as part of a partnership with a larger organization, and two said their policies were in development. The others said that there were none, other than SOGIE inclusion within a general policy framework, but not specifically in context of disaster response.

Most respondents were not clear on what an explicitly SOGIE-inclusive EM responses might look like, aside from SOGIE inclusion as part of larger policy frameworks, if at all. No respondents mentioned the inclusion of SOGIE people in their organization's COVID-19 plan, although this may be due to the larger lack of COVID-19 response planning in general.

8. *Has your organization assessed its policies on emergency assistance for LGBT individuals' special needs as a vulnerable minority group*?

There was only one organization that said they had done this as part of their inclusion program's specific focus on LGBTQ. Some said there were international policies but none specific to Vanuatu. Others again quoted their general protection policies.

9. *Does your organization collaborate with any other organizations when supporting or aiding LGBTQ individuals?*

In response to this question, a number of organizations mentioned collaborating with Oxfam, Wan Smol Bag, or the Gender Protection cluster. Only one respondent mentioned collaborating with VPride. When further asked about interest in collaboration, responses included:

- Refresher training on SOGIE to better their understanding and build strong connection
- VPride to be part of the responding team on Tanna, Malekula and Santo
- Have an MOU with VPride

10. *Does your COVID-19 plan mention LGBTQ?*

Most respondents said it did not. One mentioned specifically that LGBT people had served as volunteers in COVID 19 awareness efforts.

Our last set of questions focused on respondents' awareness of and experience with discrimination against LGBT people during emergencies.

11. *I am aware of discrimination against LGBTI people in EM service provision – Agree/Disagree*

Responses to this question were mixed, underscoring the general lack of visibility of the problem.

- I know that it happens
- Yes, through Facebook and others
- Yes, because it happens and we are trying to diminish such behaviour at all levels as much as possible

- I didn't see any one seeking help in the biggest EM after the TC Pam that's in Port Vila. When I was in Ambae I haven't seen one of this group, maybe they are hiding and do not want to come out.
- In emergency, none
- I have been here and haven't seen any feedback from that but I have to say we are friendly with the SOGIE members
- It's not observed
- We did not get any complaints on LGBTI but we do include them in our gender training. Maybe in this year 2022 we need to make an assessment and to ask that they're included in reporting. If they have issues, they can report

12. *I have observed colleagues making unwelcome remarks, emails, suggestions or jokes of a homophobic/transphobic nature – Agree/Disagree*

In response to this question, most of the respondents quoted general organizational conduct policies, restricting behavior in the workplace. However, in the field, experiences were different.

- Yes, because people are not really understanding it and that is why they can make fun, jokes. But think that in time of humanitarian response, it would be good for the GPC to assess the humanitarian workers if they are going to field. They should understand its importance from a safeguarding perspective, helping people in the communities to be aware of this through social media and key messages
- Not that I not know of
- Yes, friends and colleagues
- No not the workplace but outside in the field yes, I have seen that it happened.
- I don't encounter such behaviour in the office but and in the field working with a wide variety of people, we sometimes encounter such behaviourDisagree
- We have zero tolerance of such behaviour and have respect for individuals
- We don't tolerate such activities within the work environment even if they have someone or a client who is an LGBTIQ come in for a visit, they do not make fun or jokes around them or make them feel uncomfortable. We treat all patient with confidentiality
- We have a strong policy in place against discrimination
- Code of Conduct in place

13. *It is not possible to protect anyone's privacy during an emergency Agree/Disagree*

This question is particularly important for the SOGIE-diverse population, especially those who do not publicly identify as diverse.Generally organizations agreed with this statement, noting:

- It is important to have a privacy area especially in crowded areas for them to be feel that they are safe from stigma and discrimination.
- They need to have protection for this is very important -it is because of their privacy
- Confidentiality is part of our policy- we have to make sure that (no information) leaves
- Everyone has the right to privacy even during the emergency
- It's important to protect your no matter on what Sexual Orientation it is important to protect your privacy

Those who disagreed cited practical obstacles to privacy:

- For the evacuation centre managements it depends because sometimes the evacuation centre is very small or might be very big. We can organize for fabric to cover up small private spaces during the EM.
- We don't receive any data regarding the LGBTIQ person – in the summary report we do collect the age group and names but that is confidential
- There is a need for privacy protection however Vanuatu is too small, everyone knows everyone and information can be easily leaked out

*14.    LGBTI families are given equal respect by EM personnel during an emergency – Agree/Disagree*

Some respondents again cited general equality and respect policies. Others noted gaps in understanding:

- For sure,  if they understand it, they can be respected by EM personnel during an emergency. If they don't understand it, disrespectful  behavior can be happening.
- We need to get more information from our head officer
-  I think here in Vanuatu there are people who are disrespectful if they come across this kind of person - they can put them down by bullying them and giving them negative comments that make them feel bad and they don't care that maybe this person has special needs. In reality I have never seen or come across anyone (LGBT). Please tell all your friend that (in my organization) we are friendly people . If they are seeking help, we can assist them.

*15.    During an emergency, there is recognition of trans people and the needs of people undergoing gender transition – Agree/Disagree*

One organization agreed with this, stating that "there is a recognition of trans however we are working on getting that well recognised in where are distributed relief supplies to that is may meet their needs. Inclusion is essential overall ".  Others stated that they had not seen this, did not know about their needs, or required transpeople to come out and state their needs.

## 5. Individual Experiences in Times of Disaster

### 5.1 Summary

The previous section detailed the perspective of aid providers on SOGIE-inclusion in times of disasters. Generally, the results showed a lack of awareness and a lack of specific policies and provisions. To further support the aim of this project to increase awareness and inclusion, we wanted to capture the lived experience of SOGIE diverse people in times of disaster.

We focused on the last major disaster in Vanuatu, which was TC Harold, a category 5 cyclone that hit the northern provinces of Vanuatu. We interviewed 18 individuals on Santo, between the ages of 14 and 32 who self-identified as SOGIE-diverse. Some of these publicly identified, some did not. The individuals were found through the personal network of the lead interviewer[54].

In terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, ten of the interviewees were trans, 3 were gender queer, 3 were trans queer, and 2 were gay.

When asked about their means of livelihood, the most frequent responses were gardening, fishing, growing and selling kava, "20 vatu" (cooking and selling food at the local nakamal). Six were students, one was a government worker, and one was dependent on parents.

When asked about the impact of the disaster, the following responses were given:
- 14 said there was major damage to their house, and 4 said there was minor damage
- 13 said there was major damage to personal property, and 3 said there was minor damage
- 5 had experienced major direct injury and 3 had experienced minor direct injury
- 15 said there were major health problems as a result of TC Harold
- 13 experienced a loss of livelihood

Our focus in the interviews was on collecting stories about their actual experiences. Stories were recorded in Bislama, translated into English, and key components were extracted and edited for clarity.

Looking at the overall results, we found clear, and troublesome accounts of SOGIE-diverse exclusion, violence and harassment during times of disaster. We grouped and classified the stoties by major theme.. Nine of the stories focused on discrimination, 4 focused on stigma, 3 on slandering, 2 on violence, and 2 on exclusion from the community. Additionally, single stories also included sexual assault, theft, and exploitation. A considerable number of stories reported on evacuation centre issues.

For our report, we focused on only providing direct quotes from the interviews.

### 5.2 Individual Experiencesin Times of Disaster

*Stigma and Discrimination*

> (My friend's) buddies started saying that since we are staying under the same roof, we're in a relationship, and we are definitely sleeping together, and asked how my parents could be ok with it, and that People started talking about it in the evacuation centre, and I felt very bad, for myself but more for my parents. A few women told people to leave us be as we're in a time of crisis. One man said, "Oh, you want to defend them? He's the one looking for shelter. The cyclone came to remove the dirt of the world and he is dirt." *VPride Interview 18*

> While we were in the evacuation centre, , there was one who shook his fist at me. I felt threatened, so I stayed close to my friends to make sure he wouldn't attack me. I felt I wasn't safe in the evacuation centre, so I was pleading with my cousin for us to go back to his house

to find food. That was just an excuse to get out of the shelter. I didn't know that we would be putting ourselves at risk more, until we were warned at the door, that if we left, we'd never be allowed to go back inside….. *VPride Interview 8*

(I did not go to the evacuation centre because) there are people from other areas there and I would be be attacked. I decided to go to a friend's house for safety from both the cyclone and the attacks from people  I cannot trustthepeople around me to make sure I am safe.. *VPride Interview  3*

I ran with my mother and father to the evacuation centre. When we got to the evacuation centre, I saw some boys with other sister (trans women) friends of mine inside. I went close up to them and the boys around called me a poofter *VPride Interview 5*

I could hear people talking in the background saying, "Can't they find their own food?". There were also whispers of how we could have gone somewhere else rather than coming to their house…,I could hear the young men making jokes and saying I should  pack my bags and  go back to my destroyed house. I felt uncomfortable and unsafe. *VPride Interview 9*

Given that there were a lot of LGBT sisters already in the evacuation centre, I chose not to go there because there would be more nasty words and labelling from people in our community. I've always been alone and do not associate with the LGBT sisters during the day but at night we socialize and storian. Me being seen publicly with them could upset my reputation. *VPride Interview . 6*

*Discrimination, Slanderling and Exclusion*

As daylight rose, people started walking around and shaking hands to congratulate each other for making it through the cyclone. But as they walked past our house, all I could hear was that, "*They* should have been dead in the cyclone" …. We receive hate from people in the community, even to the point where I am regarded as a curse to my family because of my sexual orientation. People still say that we should have been gone from the cyclone. It's not safe [for us here]. *VPride Interview 11*

"Oh, that poofter is here is here" ……Some of the boys that said that about me came and asked me for 500 vatu for kava and cigarettes. Normally I'd hand it out to them, but I didn't have my wallet on me. So, they went back to their corner and started laughing at me and calling me names. People started staring and laughing at me.  I decided to make my way out [of the evacuation centre] and back to our house - I could feel safer there with friends than at the evacuation centre. *VPride Interview 17*

When they noticed I came (to the centre), back, they said, "That poofter has returned." That's why I wish it was me and not Jerry who died; so, people wouldn't continue to discriminate against me. In our village, people who do not have overseas exposure do not think that way. Often those who go abroad, start influencing others when they return. For me, I felt normal all this time until all the seasonal worked who had returned started threatening me, sexually abusing me, and stealing from me. Often, they'd come and take kava and say they'll pay for it later, or that they'll have sex with me in exchange. I wish it had been me instead of Jerry who died. *VPride Interview 10*

While my mother and I were trying to ensure everyone was safe and comfortable, I could hear someone asking whether I was a man or a woman. My anger started to rise but my mother stepped in and asked me to do something that took my mind off the issue. I am discriminated against because of who I am and who my mother is. We are regarded as evil people in our community. *VPride Interview 13*

During the cyclone, everyone ran for safety and shelter. I saw a little girl that was crying and alone, drenched from the rain. I brought her inside to be safe and wrapped her in a towel. I asked her where her parents went but she was wailing and crying. As her mother and father

were so worried, thinking she was swept away by the cyclone, the whole community was looking for the girl, going from door to door. When they to our house and found her. Instead of saying thank you, they swore at me, thinking that I had kidnapped and hidden her. The young men wanted to beat me up, and all kinds of nasty words were thrown at me, like being a child molester. My brother came to the rescue and told the boys off and told the family that if it wasn't for me, the girl would have died. Had I known, I wouldn't have saved the little girl... VPride Interview 14

*Discrimination, Violence, Theft, Sexual Assault, Exploitation of Disability*

My father as an elder in the church is respected and he opens his arms to all people, as is his Godly duty. What he didn't realize Is that right under his nose, these Church members use vulgar and hostile language towards me, such as "cuttem out kok blong u mo wearem kan" (chop off your penis and replace it with a vagina) A group of older men came by and slapped me, held me up, "stop blo mekem disgrace" (end this disgrace you brought upon us), squeezed my genital area, held me in the boys' quarters, and cut and shaved my head. I screamed and cried but people around me were shouting "Good on him! He deserves it?!" Breaking through my shower of tears I struggled to escape but suddenly I was punched in the face, my nose started bleeding, and I felt dizzy, seeing myself and my cut-off hair fallen down on the ground. *VPride Interview 4*

At the entrance I managed to get everyone inside. Whilst everyone was going in, out of nowhere a blow of a fist landed on my face. I thought it was a just a mistake as everyone was rushing in the dark to ensure that everyone is safe. Then another person punched the back of my head…. Although I felt pain, I still made my way through the midst of the crowd, clustering together for warmth and comfort. It is so dark that I couldn't figure out who is who – identity check fail. Then I hear giggling and men saying "me fightem hem blo I mas change" (I punched him because he must change) so that he would change) *VPride Interview 2*

Whilst I was trying to stay calm and look after my injuries, I heard people shouting in the quarters where some young men and adolescent boys from other areas were stealing. That very moment I knew that I would not see any of my personal belongings again. *VPride Interview 1-*

In the evacuation centre, a man whom I trusted as a dear friend and elder, asked me if we could share one blanket together so we could stay warm. Even though his clothes were quite wet and mine too, we cuddled together and had the blanket over us. Then he started to grab my crotch. I felt very awkward but he whispered r, "Stay quiet. You'll love this." *VPride Interview 7*

(As a SOGIE diverse person with a disability), I get mocked and teased, but behind closed doors, people ask for sex and kava. The young men who I have sexual encounters with, ignore me and make silly remarks about me because of my disability and my sexuality. This is something I don't talk about. Because you have asked me, I'm telling. It is the reality I have faced here, even during the cyclone. They asked me for money for cigarettes and also for kava. I sent them with money to buy a bottle of kava for us to drink together during the cyclone, but I never saw it. When I saw them the next day, they told me that the wind was too strong to return to the house. I think they lied to me and used me to get kava. These people are just exploiting me because of who I am. *VPride Interview 15*

# 6. Guidelines for SOGIE Inclusion

## 6.1 Process of development

Based on the comprehensive review of existing law, humanitarian principles, research, and policy recommendations, a set of guidelines was developed for humanitarian actors in Vanuatu and the Pacific. In developing these guidelines, our major aim was to create a guide that was practical, moving from general concepts and principles to concrete action steps.

In the process we also reviewed an extensive set of existing guidelines [55] and when relevant, either incorporated or adapted those to the Vanuatu context. To make the process even more useable, we turned the guidelines into an assessment tool, that can be used initially as a way to measure the current level of SOGIE inclusion for an organization. Based on the initial assessment, the organization can identify priority actions and steps. Subsequently, the tool can be used to measure progress over time.

This guideline and assessment tool is accompanied by an online SOGIE inclusion course, that is available on the VPride website. The course was developed when in March of 2022, more than 2 years after the rest of the world, Vanuatu experienced its first community outbreak of COVID-19, and went into lockdowns .

The online course can be taken individually or in a group. It includes three online quizzes and upon completion of the course and the quizzes VPride will provide the individual with a Certificate of Completion. Once new protocols are in place, VPride will also be available to provide the course face-to-face.

## 6.2 Assessment and Action Planning Tool for effective SOGIE diverse Inclusion in Disaster Preparedness and Response

Effective SOGIE-inclusion in disaster preparedness and response is a complex and challenging goal. Effective design and implementation of processes and standards requires changes at the levels of policy, organizational culture, and organizational practice. Furthermore, SOGIE-inclusive organizations must remain committed to this high standard by regularly reflecting on their practices, and continuously improving them.

The checklist below is organized around 6 key inclusion principles and accompanying practices:

1. Build a SOGIE inclusive Organization
2. Work Collaboratively
3. Ensure Inclusive Monitoring and Evaluation
4. Train your Staff and Volunteers
5. Provide SOGIE Inclusive Services
6. Provide Inclusive Shelter and Evacuation Centers

| Assessment and Action Planning Tool | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Principle 1. Build a SOGIE-inclusive Organization** <br> The first step towards inclusion begins at home, by reviewing your own organization's culture, policies and practices on SOGIE inclusion, recognizing that this may be a long-term transformative process, that takes place step by step, beginning with self-awareness. | | | |
| **General Principles & Best Practices** | **Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Ensure that your organization acknowledges the human rights of SOGIE-diverse people | Is SOGIE diversity mentioned anywhere in your mission, vision, values, code of conduct or other key documents? | | |
| Ensure that your organization does not have SOGIE discriminatory policies or practices – intentionally or otherwise | Do your policies and practices discriminate against SOGIE diversity, intentionally or otherwise? If no, how does this show in your staffing and other practices? | | |
| Maintain a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, bullying, and discrimination that includes SOGIE diversity. | Does your organization's anti harassment, bullying and discrimination policy specifically mention and prohibit such activities against SOGIE diverse people? | | |
| Clearly state, post and share relevant policies with volunteers, staff, and communities | Can volunteers, staff and communities locate and identify your organization's policies? | | |
| Include accessible and effective reporting/complaint mechanisms | Do current reporting mechanisms work efficiently and effectively to resolve issues as they occur? | | |
| Elevate SOGIE "champions" who actively support SOGIE events and issues | Do you have effectively informed and connected SOGIE champions and allies in your organization, and are they respected and heard? | | |
| Demonstrate through your communications, your materials, your staffing, and your policies that you value and respect SOGIE diverse community members | Do your communications, materials, staffing and policies show clearly that you value and respect SOGIE diverse community members? | | |
| **Priority actions for your organization in this area:** <br> **1.** <br> **2.** <br> **3.** <br> **Success Measures for the Actions above:** | | | |

| Principle 2. Work Collaboratively<br>Working collaboratively with SOGIE diverse community groups and leaders is the best way to ensure that your DRR and ER are inclusive and that your organization gets the best information and support possible | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **General Principles & Best Practices** | **Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Work collaboratively with SOGIE diverse community groups and leaders | Have you identified and included SOGIE diverse community leaders and organizations in your planning and response activities? | | |
| Develop partnerships with SOGIE organizations for policy development and staff training | Have you developed a partnership with VPride for policy development and staff training? | | |
| Include SOGIE diverse people in emergency preparedness planning. | Does your emergency preparedness planning include consideration of the needs of SOGIE diverse people? | | |
| Whenever possible, ensure that your volunteers and staff include SOGIE diverse people | Do your staff and volunteers include SOGIE diverse people? | | |
| Maintain SOGIE-diverse representation in clusters, forums, discussions, emergency response and data collection | Has your organization invited or advocated for SOGIE diverse representation in the spaces you work in? | | |
| Acknowledge the contribution of SOGIE organizations and people to DRR, and valuing their willingness and capacity to contribute to emergency response | Does your organization recognize the contributions of SOGIE diverse people and acknowledge and support their contributions? | | |
| Support community self-help activities and coping mechanisms | Does your organization support VPride and its allies to provide support, protection and assistance to SOGIE diverse people? | | |
| **Priority actions for your organization in this area:**<br>**1.**<br>**2.**<br>**3.**<br>**Success Measures for the Actions above:** | | | |
| **Principle 3: Ensure Inclusive Monitoring and Evaluation**<br>SOGIE-inclusion at the level of data collection has presented a significant obstacle to many organizations, as it does not fit within the typical heteronormative framework. As such, a SOGIE-inclusive organization must take extra effort to modify its policies and practices to effectively account for LGBTIQ+ diversity in its DRR and ER projects. | | | |
| **General Principles & Best Practices** | **Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Practice data collection that includes gender identity and sexual orientation | Do inquiries about sex or gender include SOGIE diverse response options? | | |
| Ensure that inquiries about relationship status are SOGIE-inclusive | Do response options include things like partnership, informal relations, etc.? | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ensure that data collection is safe and protects privacy of SOGIE diverse people | Do you have policies in place for data protection and privacy? | | |
| Use a definition of household includes everyone living at the residence at the time of disaster | Is your organization's household definition restricted to heterosexual family relationship? | | |
| Implement a reporting/ complaint system that tracks exclusion, harassment or violence against SOGIE-diverse people | Do reporting mechanisms clearly mention discrimination against LGBTQI+ and provides lines of action for reporting abuse? | | |
| Set monitoring and evaluation objectives, targets and indicators related to SOGIE diversity | Has your organization set specific goals for improving SOGIE inclusion, outreach and advocacy? | | |

**Priority actions for your organization in this area:**
1.
2.
3.
**Success Measures for the Actions above:**

**Principle 4: Train your Staff**
SOGIE inclusion is in large part realized by the efforts of an organization's own staff, and the environment within an organization itself. Regular refreshers on LGBTIQ+ sensitivity should be held so that all staff feel comfortable and confident regarding SOGIE related issues

| General Principles & Best Practices | Checklist | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ensure that all volunteers and staff are trained in SOGIE-awareness, and understand how to reduce SOGIE related vulnerability | Have volunteers and staff undergone at least one SOGIE-centered training? | | |
| Reinforce the training of volunteers and staff are trained regarding SOGIE-based harassment, discrimination and violence | Can volunteers and staff clearly explain the current reporting protocol regarding SOGIE-based harassment, discrimination and violence? | | |
| Hold regular refresher trainings for EM personnel on LGBTQI+ special needs as a vulnerable group. | Does your organization have at least one LGBTQI+ related refresher training planned for the coming year? | | |
| Seek first-hand knowledge of the special issues faced by LGBTQI+ people on a daily basis, and of how they are at higher risk during disasters. | Has your organization established a regular communication with a SOGIE-focused local CSO to maintain a current understanding of the community's current needs and how your organization can support them? | | |

**Priority actions for your organization in this area:**
1.
2.
3.
**Success Measures for the Actions above:**

| Principle 5: Provide SOGIE Inclusive Services | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The needs of gender and sex minorities must be understood, acknowledged, and responded to in the design and delivery of disaster preparedness and response services. With the aid of SOGIE-centered organizations, ensure that your emergency response includes targeted services, including: | | | |
| **General Principles & Best Practices** | **Checklist** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Ensure that safeguarding and protection policies and codes of conduct specifically mention SOGIE diversity | Are SOGIE-centered safeguarding policies clearly mentioned in your organization's code of conduct? | | |
| Ensure impartiality of services provided includes SOGIE diverse people | Have you reviewed your services and access policies to ensure there is no discrimination against SOGIE diverse people, e.g., by privileging traditional family or household structures? | | |
| Train staff, volunteers and all others to acknowledge and use a person's preferred name and gender identification of transgender people. | Do staff and volunteers regularly use preferred pronouns and gender identification when interacting with others? | | |
| Understand the special needs and concerns of SOGIE diverse people in times of disaster | Does your organization regularly reflect on SOGIE-related issues it encounters before and after emergency relief efforts? | | |
| Plan actions and services which explicitly recognize and responds to the identified needs of SOGIE diverse people in times of disaster | What actions and services does your organization provide that explicitly recognize and respond to the needs of SOGIE diverse people? | | |
| Ensure that services are accessible to and safe for SOGIE diverse people | Have you reviewed the accessibility and safety of your service provisions for SOGIE diverse people? Do you have any special provisions or outreach in place? | | |
| Provide mental health and other support related to GBV and trauma, that specifically includes support for SOGIE diverse people | Does your organization provide access to counseling and emergency trauma care during an emergency? If so, does this include services for SOGIE-diverse people? | | |
| Utilize gender-disaggregated data collection and ensure that this includes data collection on SOGIE-diverse people | Has your organization received training on, and effectively implemented, gender-disaggregated data collection? If so, does this include data collection related to SOGIE diversity? | | |
| Provide inclusive emergency kits during a disaster, as Individuals often evacuate without personal toiletries and ensure these are available to SOGIE diverse people without questioning gender identity | Does your organization provide SOGIE inclusive kits containing clothing, makeup, shaving supplies and other items used for daily grooming? Are these kits available to SOGIE diverse people without questioning their gender identity? | | |
| Support and protect safe spaces for SOGIE-diverse people | With the help of a SOGIE-centered CSO, can your organization direct individuals to SOGIE-friendly safe spaces during an emergency? Has your organization found ways to support those spaces? | | |

| Anticipate issues regarding discrepancies between gender identity, gender presentation, and stated gender on identification documents | As it is unnecessary and harmful to question or express hostility towards an individual because of their stated or presenting identity, does your organization have a policy in place which provides guidance regarding gender presentation and identification documents? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cash transfer programs should include SOGIE diverse people as a vulnerable group to be supported | Do your cash transfer programs identify and serve SOGIE diverse people as a vulnerable group? | | |

**Priority actions for your organization in this area:**
**1.**
**2.**
**3.**
**Success Measures for the Actions above:**

**Principle 6: Provide Inclusive Shelter and Evacuation Centers**
Create an inclusive environment for LGBT people so they will feel safe seeking assistance at your center during a disaster or other emergency, and act preventatively and directly on any violence, harassment, bullying or discrimination

| General Principles & Best Practices | Checklist | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ensure that evacuation centers have a clear, zero tolerance anti-discrimination, anti-harassment and anti-violence policies | Are anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, and anti-violence policies clearly and visibly posted in multiple locations around evacuation centers? | | |
| Implement policies which include accessible and effective reporting and complaint mechanisms. | Is information regarding reporting mechanisms clearly and accessibly shared around evacuation centers? Is there effective complaint recording and follow-up? | | |
| Recruit SOGIE diverse staff for shelters and evacuation centres | Does your organization employ SOGIE diverse staff or volunteers in its shelters and evacuation centres? Are they supported effectively | | |
| Provide safe and protected spaces for SOGIE diverse people whenever possible | Does your organization provide access to a SOGIE safe space during its emergency relief effort? Do you regularly verify that the space is still safe? | | |
| Ensure that all individuals have access to appropriate restroom and shower facilities consistent with their gender identity. Alternatively, provide gender neutral toilets at emergency shelter sites | If feasible and appropriate, does your organization's emergency shelter Incorporate gender neutral toilets? If not, what other provisions or protections are available, such as shower curtains or doors to ensure privacy and safety? | | |
| Develop, sharing, and implementing inclusive practices and policies in the operation of emergency shelters | Are SOGIE-inclusive policies and practices in place, shared, implemented, and monitored? | | |
| Train all evacuation center staff on gender diverse inclusive practices and policies. | Have evacuation center staff received training on gender diverse inclusion practices within the last year? Do they | | |

| | fully understand the safety and protection issues and policies? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Uphold anti-discrimination, harassment and violence policies | Are anti-abuse policies clearly posted around your organization's emergency shelters? Do staff and evacuees understand the policies? | | |
| Inform community members entering evacuation centers regarding zero tolerance policies against harassment, discrimination and violence | Does your organization consistently inform community members of zero tolerance abuse policies at its emergency shelters? Are these policies enforced? | | |
| Train shelter volunteers regarding how to report incidents of violence or discrimination | Can all shelter volunteers clearly articulate your organization's reporting mechanisms? | | |
| Take all reasonable steps to protect people from violence and coercion | Have you taken all steps to be aware of violence against SOGIE diverse people and prevent such violence? | | |
| Ensure lack of coercion and inappropriate incentives | If evacuation centres are not safe, have you provided optional spaces, places, support and incentives? | | |

**Priority actions for your organization in this area:**
**1.**
**2.**
**3.**
**Success Measures for the Actions above**

## Conclusion

This report presented a a review of SOGIE inclusion in times of disaster. Following a review of legal and humanitarian regulations and principles, key issues facing SOGIE diverse people during and after disaster were presented, using both global and local research.

A main finding of the report was that the failure on the part of humanitarian organizations to identify SOGIE diverse people as a vulnerable group leads to lack of protection from violence and lack of access to humanitarian support.

The report presents a comprehensive set of guidelines for organizations to be used to begin to provide effective inclusion of SOGIE diverse people in humanitarian preparedness and response. Organizations are encouraged to follow the guidelines and to collaborate with VPride in further training and in the provision of disaster response related services.

Given Vanuatu's commitment to human rights, through its own People's Plan and through its international commitments, working on SOGIE inclusion and human rights *must become a priority* for Vanuatu government and for its citizens.

Given the commitment of humanitarian actors to the Humanitarian Charter , Principles, and Standards, SOGIE inclusion in times of disaster can no looker be overlooked.

> "There are 17 sustainable development goals all based on a single, guiding principle: to leave no one behind. We will only realize this vision if we reach all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

– United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, remarks at the High Level LGBT Core Group Event, "Leaving No-One Behind: Equality & Inclusion in the Post-2015 Development Agenda," New York, 29 September 2015

# End Notes

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- Making disaster risk reduction and relief programmes LGBTI-inclusive: examples from Nepal https://odihpn.org/magazine/making-disaster-risk-reduction-and-relief-programmes-lgbti-inclusive-examples-from-nepal/
- Gender and Disaster Pod. Gender and Emergency Management Action Checklist. http://www.genderanddisaster.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/FINAL-National-GEM-guidelines-checklist.pdf