

Responding To A Crisis

Meet the Grantees of Outright's
COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ
Emergency Fund



OUTRIGHT
INTERNATIONAL

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A recipient of groceries supplied by Queer Youth Uganda.

Introduction

In times of crisis those who are most marginalized tend to suffer disproportionately compared to the broader population. This is all too relevant for LGBTIQ people, who experience higher levels of discrimination, violence, exclusion, and deprivation, especially where same-sex relations or transgender identities are criminalized.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the effects on LGBTIQ communities were devastating. Outright's report "Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTIQ People" documents a devastation of livelihood, rising food and shelter insecurity; disruptions in accessing healthcare, including crucial HIV medication and gender-affirming treatment; elevated risk of domestic and family violence; social isolation and increased anxiety; scapegoating of LGBTIQ people for the pandemic; abuse of state power; and threats to the survival of LGBTIQ organizations. While significant sections of the population may experience similar effects, LGBTIQ people tend to also be excluded from relief efforts which take a binary gendered approach, use unsafe spaces (such as police stations) for distribution, use non-inclusive definitions of "family", or due to homophobic or transphobic relief workers.

"This is the first experience that we as transgender men have ever had of being considered for any grant. And with respect. For the first time we feel like we are part of this society. Our prayers and wishes are with your team and donors who were concerned about our need in this pandemic period. Thank you so much to you all."

– Two trans men from District Malir in Pakistan

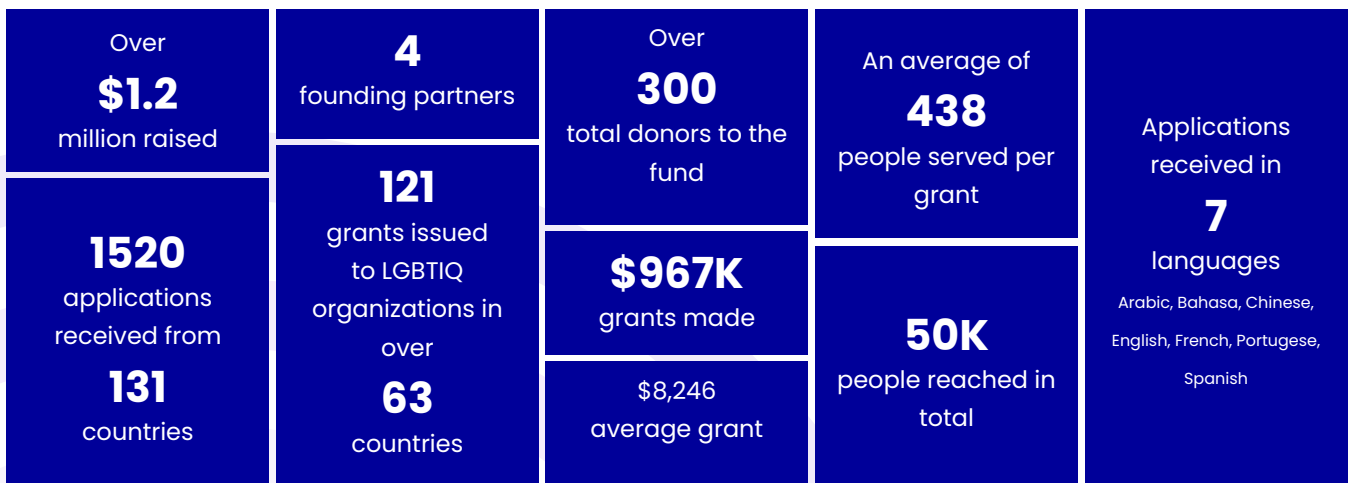
The COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund

Outright has been fighting for the human rights of LGBTIQ people everywhere for 30 years. We have a network of strong connections with activists all over the world. As we learned about the devastation of livelihoods that LGBTIQ people were facing and the challenges organizations were experiencing in trying to meet the need brought about by the pandemic, Outright was well-positioned to respond swiftly.

In April 2020 we launched the COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund to support LGBTIQ people and organizations where governments, religious organizations, humanitarian relief agencies, and other programs failed to do so.

Outright International's COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund is the largest global COVID-response fund for LGBTIQ communities in the world.

The Fund in Numbers



Numbers as of 13 November 2020

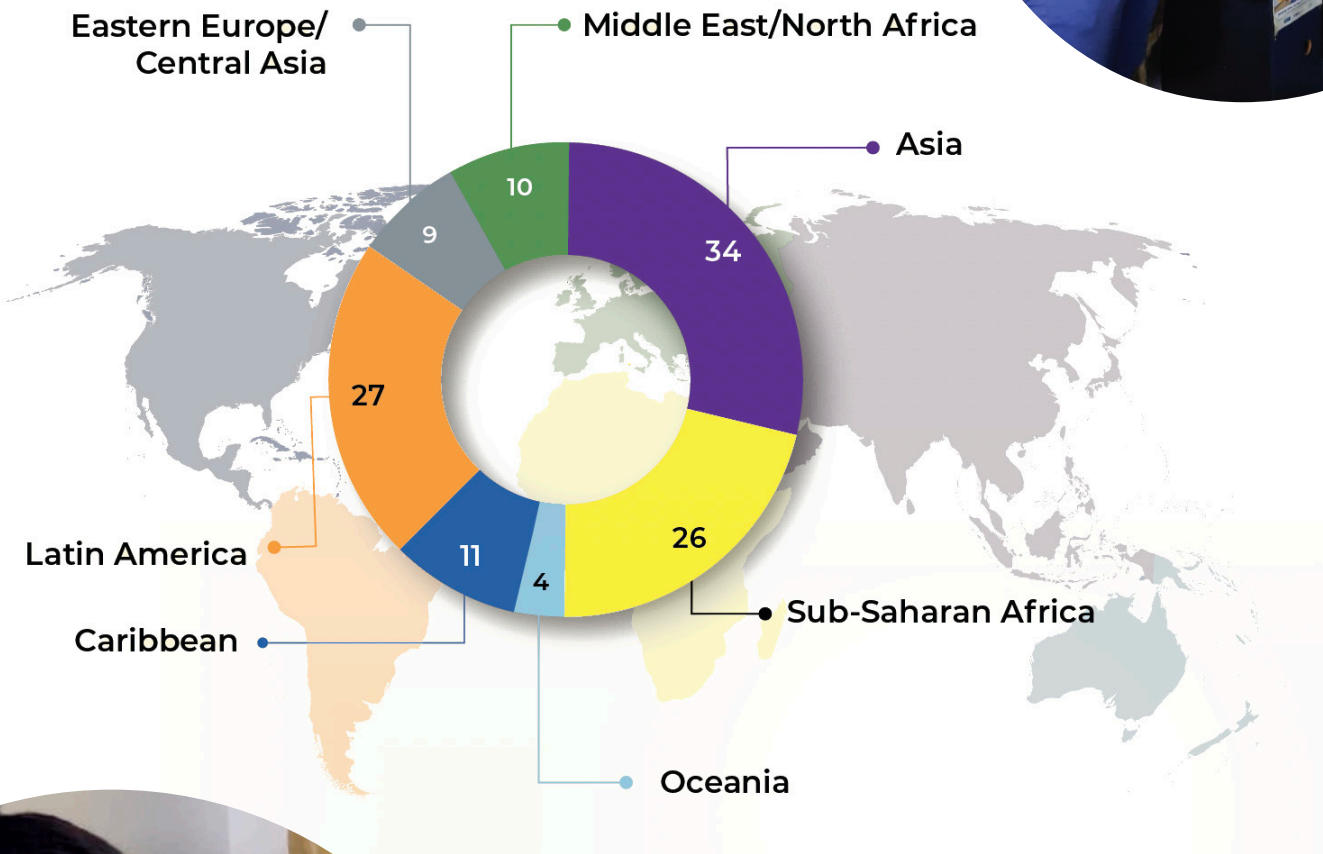
Impact of Grants

Six months after the fund was first launched, we have received reports from grantees about the use and impact of the funds.

\$12 funding request	\$1.2m+ funds raised (as of 13 November 2020)
1,488 eligible applications received from communities in need	121 total grants made (as of 13 November 2020)
55% alleviation of hunger 	\$967K total grants made (as of 13 November 2020)
20% health care 	\$8,246 average grant amount
10% Organizational survival 	438 average number of people served per grant



Grants by Region



Meet Our Grantees

Through the COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund we supported 121 organizations who, in turn, reached over 50,000 people who were severely impacted by the pandemic, the surrounding containment measures or economic fall-out. For every single person, the support they received – whether it was a food and sanitation package, mental health support through online platforms, support to pay rent, help in accessing crucial medication, or access to an LGBTIQ shelter – was important, and, often, life-saving. For the organizations coordinating the response, the grant provided a way to support their respective communities in a time of need.

We can not share the stories of each of the organizations, or all of the beneficiaries, but we'd like to share a few. These stories were sent to us by grantees, told in their own words.

United and Strong – St Lucia

United and Strong fights for LGBTIQ Equality in St Lucia, and regionally across the Caribbean.

The LGBTIQ community in St Lucia was badly affected by the pandemic, with many losing jobs, being unable to purchase food and personal protective equipment, or to pay their bills.

A lot of funding and assistance was provided to the general populous; however, the LGBTIQ population was largely left out. There were no provisions made for our community. The grant from Outright made a huge impact on the organization. We were able to help more than 75 persons by providing food, masks, hand sanitizers, blankets, and water.

One beneficiary living with HIV told us "I became unemployed, and I don't have a stable place to live. Any money I had was going to my medication. But taking medication with nothing to eat has been really hard. The package was a huge form of relief. It gave me food for a small period of time, so I could eat healthily and take my medication".

Queer Youth Uganda

Queer Youth Uganda have been defending the human rights of LGBTIQ people since 2006. Although their main base is in Kampala, the organization focuses on supporting LGBTIQ youth in regions across the country.

Government relief in Uganda focused on urban, not rural districts, leaving people outside urban centers unable to access it. Youth are among the most vulnerable groups in LGBTIQ communities, facing bullying in schools, and often still being dependent on unsupportive or even abusive family members. Through the grant issued by Outright, we were able to support 112 LGBTIQ youth in the Bunyoro–Kitara Region and Southern regions of Uganda with food, and cleaning and sanitizing supplies, such as face masks and hand sanitizer.

One of them is Shaban, a 21-year old who (pre-lockdown) was self-employed and running a roadside business making and selling rolled eggs. Upon declaration of a national lockdown, he was forced to shut down his business and was left with no income.

“When Queer Youth Uganda delivered the food items at my door step, I was so happy. I felt relieved. It gave me hope”. He told us that the food aid and personal protection equipment given to him by Queer Youth Uganda enabled him to survive a whole month as he awaited the national lockdown to be eased so he could resume working in his small business.”



Photo: Queer Youth Uganda with food to be distributed.

Triangle Project, South Africa

Triangle Project is an LGBTIQ human rights organization in South Africa, with a key focus on Health and Support of LGBTIQ community members, especially elderly people and ones with suppressed immune systems. The demand for health support from the organization increased drastically with the onset of COVID.

An often overlooked group within LGBTIQ communities are the elderly. They can be isolated with little or no contact with broader LGBTIQ groups or social circles. Many elderly LGBTIQ people do not have children, and many are estranged from their families, leaving them cut off from conventional support structures.

In the context of COVID-19, elderly people are also at particular risk of suffering severe effects of the virus, including death. As such, with the onset of the pandemic, our work supporting and caring for elderly LGBTIQ people became more urgent and necessary. The grant from Outright enabled us to focus specifically on COVID-19 related care, to fund our medical team in supporting elderly LGBTIQ people who got infected, to support their care and recovery.

One couple we were able to help were both 85 years old. They had been together for 65 years, since a time when same-sex relations were still criminalized in South Africa. They lived through apartheid, were impacted by forced removals, lived through the onslaught of AIDS, and were able to marry in 2010 on their 50th anniversary. Both were not in touch with family, and had few friends as they faced the reality of COVID. Both contracted the virus, and reached out to our team as they were not able to cope alone. Our health manager and nurse went out to their residence to find that they were both visibly ill, and had not been able to get out of bed, eat properly, or take care of hygiene for close to two weeks. Our team took them to the hospital to get tested, cleaned up, fed them and ensured they were comfortable.

Both men tested positive for COVID. Triangle's nurse was in constant contact with the doctors and the staff on the COVID ward, ensuring that they were given beds next to one another. Unfortunately one of them passed away. We arranged to have his surviving partner released into our care to ensure that he was supported, and not alone. With the assistance of the health team, ties with his family were reestablished and although they are of the same or similar age and therefore unable to care for him, it meant a lot to him that they are all back in contact with one another, especially at this difficult time.



Organization in Egypt

This organization is kept anonymous for safety reasons.

The grant received from Outright helped us to provide financial assistance, help with safe shelter and accommodation, food, and medicine for 42 LGBTIQ refugees and asylum seekers.

One such client was a gay man in his late 20s who arrived in Egypt from Sudan in 2019. He had to flee Sudan after he was discovered to be gay at his workplace and faced threats of public outing and violence. Since arriving to Egypt he had been suffering from homesickness, trauma from kidnapping, an HIV positive status, stigmatization and discrimination. When COVID hit he lost his work and had to move in with a friend, but unfortunately that wasn't safe because her boyfriend was homophobic.

With funds from Outright, we were able to provide him with interim supplies of HIV medication, financial support for housing and food, and psychological support. We also connected him to UN agencies that can help with his case on a long-term basis.

He told us: "I was in a critical situation and this grant managed to cover my accommodation and living expenses at a dire period.

Thank you for your efforts."

"I am grateful that you helped me; I was in a critical situation and this grant managed to cover my accommodation and living expenses at a dire period. Thank you for your efforts."



Restless Development, Nepal

Restless Development is a youth centered organization, working to empower young people to become leaders. In Nepal the organization has been focusing on sexual education, ending gender-based violence, and child marriage. A specific program has focused on engaging LGBTIQ youth and working on ending discrimination.

With support from Outright International we were able to distribute 364 sets of relief packages to LGBTIQ people across 2 different districts. The packages consisted of basic food and sanitation supplies.

The impact of the pandemic, surrounding containment measures and economic fall-out, had a severe impact on the mental health of LGBTIQ community members. This was not only due to a devastation of livelihood caused by job loss and inability to pay bills, but also being cut off from community members, and often being stuck in homes with unsupportive or even abusive family members. We know of at least 11 LGBTIQ people who committed suicide and 6 who attempted suicide during the three months of lockdown. To try to alleviate the mental health impact our community members were experiencing, we hosted two large group virtual psycho-social counselling sessions with a professional counsellor. Another 45 individual sessions were also held with 16 individuals who were facing particular mental health challenges. Participants also formed a messenger chat group to support each other.

A key challenge for people living with HIV/AIDS was accessing their medication during the lockdown. Through this project we were able to assist 20 people to safely travel to medical centers to access their medication. Food and financial support was also given when needed.

The relief package support, mental health counseling sessions and support to people living with HIV/AIDS helped to minimize the challenges faced by LGBTIQ people during the pandemic.



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

Humraz Male Health Society – Pakistan

Humraz Male Health Society is a community-led organization which works to improve male health, particularly among trans men and men who have sex with men (MSM).

MSM and trans male communities are very marginalized groups in Pakistan. Trans men in particular predominantly rely on begging, sex work, and performing at events such as weddings, none of which were possible during the COVID lockdowns. While MSM populations tend to be low-wage earners in the informal sector and depend on daily wages to survive. Under COVID they had little to no job security.

Through the project we were able to support 100 trans and MSM individuals, who were identified through a need-based application process. Each person was supplied with a ration bag of food supplies, health products, nutrition support, and some cash to support the payment of utilities. The provision of sanitation materials was particularly important as the majority of the people identified for receipt of these packages lived in slums or dilapidated buildings without crucial utilities such as running water.

“Saeedullah is a very detached area from the main city, numerous trans community members are dwelling there. We are all very obliged to your team that identified and considered our need and poverty at this particularly harsh time of lockdown, approached and visited us multiple times to give us support. May you all stay safe and blessed, thank you for all the endowments”.

– Trans recipient from Saeedullah-Goth, District West

Funds Raised

We are extremely grateful for the generosity and solidarity of the Founding Partners of our Emergency Fund: Calvin Klein, Inc., Dunn Family Charitable Foundation, Gilead Sciences, Inc., and Microsoft Corp. In addition to Founding Partners, Fund Supporters include: 2K, Akamai Technologies, Boston Consulting Group, Capital One, Channel Foundation, Deloitte Services LP, Deutsche Bank, Horizons Foundation, Hunter Boot, Open Society Foundations, Rainbow Railroad, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble Company, Salesforce, Sellen Community Foundation, Visa, Warner Music Group and several institutions that have chosen to remain anonymous.

Outright also wishes to thank the Partnership for Global LGBTI Equality (PGLE), a World Economic Forum Lighthouse Project, for its collaboration in widely promoting the Fund, and the following institutions for their pro bono assistance in reviewing Fund applications: Out for Good/Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, EY, Open Finance NYC, P&G and Salesforce.

With the help of these partners and hundreds of generous individual contributors, we have raised over \$1.2 million US dollars – an impressive amount which meets only a fraction of the need.



Members of the group LGBT Forum Progress from Montenegro

Foreword

Dear friends,

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we knew that LGBTIQ people would be severely affected, for in times of crisis the most marginalized communities tend to suffer disproportionately compared to the broader population.

We knew too well that LGBTIQ people everywhere experience higher levels of discrimination, violence, and exclusion, especially where same-sex relations or transgender identities are criminalized, and we knew that these vulnerabilities are amplified when a crisis unfolds. We also knew that LGBTIQ people tend to be excluded from humanitarian responses which take a binary gendered approach, choose unsafe spaces (such as police stations) for distribution of supplies, use non-inclusive definitions of “family”, or employ LGBTIQ-phobic relief workers.



Kyrgyz Indigo and Labrys deliver staples for LGBTIQ people in Kyrgyzstan. Photo courtesy of the groups.

With thirty years of experience in fighting for the rights of LGBTIQ people everywhere, Outright knew that the situation would lead to a crisis within a crisis for LGBTIQ communities. We had to mobilize to ensure that life-saving support would be available for LGBTIQ people at this time. As such, we launched the COVID-19 Global LGBTIQ Emergency Fund in April 2020 with a modest target of raising \$30,000.

Six months on, we have raised \$1.2 million. And the absolute majority of these funds are “new money” – funds that would not have been made available to LGBTIQ communities if it hadn’t been for Outright’s relentless and creative approach, and the incredible generosity of our donors. An astounding \$500,000 came from corporate contributions! Combined, the support has reached over 50,000 people. It is the biggest global COVID-relief fund for LGBTIQ people.

I knew that we could mobilize resources for our community in a time of need. But not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined how successful we would be. This fund, the number of LGBTIQ organizations and people it has helped, the number of donors – new and known – who contributed to it, is one of the proudest achievements of my eight years as the Executive Director of Outright.

This briefing will introduce you to some of the grantees of the fund, and show their dedication, resilience and creativity in supporting their communities in a time of dire need.

When we work together we can move mountains. Thank you for moving them with us!



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