



# The Meridian Fund

Accelerating Global LGBTIQ Equality

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# LGBTIQ rights have expanded significantly in the last 30 years

- 48 countries have **decriminalized same-sex relations** since 1994 – 14 in the last seven years
- **Marriage equality has been codified** at the federal level in 37 countries since 2001
- 18 countries now **allow transgender and gender diverse people to determine their identify** for themselves on legal documents
- **The global LGBTIQ movement is growing:** Pride events were held in at least 100 countries in 2023 and the vast majority of countries now have strong or emerging LGBTIQ groups



# And yet, the LGBTIQ community is under fierce, sustained attack

**63 countries around the world still criminalize homosexuality, in some cases punishable by death.**

**An increasing number of laws and policies are being promoted that seek to further criminalize, marginalize, or even erase LGBTIQ communities.**

**104 countries target trans people through laws prohibiting vagrancy, cross-dressing, etc.**

**Harmful, abusive conversion practices are prevalent globally and can cause lasting trauma.**

**Crackdowns are rising on LGBTIQ activism in China, Russia, and many other places – and authoritarian leaders often scapegoat and target LGBTIQ people.**

**Well-funded anti-LGBTIQ groups are coordinating efforts and attacks across borders.**

# The global movement is vastly under-resourced

For every \$100 given by foundations in 2021–22, less than 39 cents went to LGBTI causes. Of this total, **less than a third went to support programs in the Global South and East**. In addition, only 5% of all foundation giving focused on human rights causes – and 1% of government funding – goes to support LGBTIQ communities. Meanwhile, just 3 large organizations working to oppose LGBTI human rights reported a combined income of over \$1 billion, more than that of all 8,000 grantees across the global LGBTI movement in 2021–22.\*

**We cannot remain passive while authoritarianism rises, marginalized communities face increasing attacks, and conservative, extremist donors invest millions to roll back fundamental human rights across borders.**

\* *2021–2022 Global Resources Report: Government & Philanthropic Support for LGBTI Communities*, Global Philanthropy Project

\**Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking*, 2019, Candid & Human Rights Funding Network

# The Meridian Fund

Outright International has launched ***The Meridian Fund***, an ambitious new collaborative philanthropic initiative, to galvanize individual and institutional partners to support underserved LGBTIQ communities around the world.

**Our goal is to advance the global LGBTIQ movement by resourcing grassroots partners to safeguard progress and accelerate transformational social and legal change in under-resourced regions and countries.**

The Fund will build the long-term capacity of promising LGBTIQ groups and seize opportunities to support coordinated, strategic interventions to fuel progressive change and effectively counter rising and evolving threats.

Investing in LGBTIQ activism also means supporting gender equality; climate, racial, and economic justice; and more. **Inclusive and expansive philanthropy must embrace and prioritize LGBTIQ people, because we exist in every community and are disproportionately impacted by social, economic, and humanitarian crises.** Our lives and rights are intertwined, and our activism and philanthropy must be, too.



# The Meridian Fund – Goals

## Build the Movement

Dramatic growth in the number, size and strength of local and national LGBTIQ groups in under-resourced countries and regions.

**Visionary LGBTIQ leadership built in at least 20 countries**, prioritizing the development of trans, intersex, and women leaders.

LGBTIQ groups successfully mobilize their communities and allies to undertake advocacy campaigns that **build public and political support for LGBTIQ rights in at least 15 countries**.

**At least one strong LGBTIQ organization is formed in at least six of the 25 countries** where Outright is currently not able to document the existence of any organizations.

## Safeguard Progress and Accelerate Social & Legal Change

Maintain existing, and advance new, freedoms and legal protections for millions of LGBTIQ people around the world, and in particular in under-resourced countries and regions.

Decriminalize same-sex relations in at least 10 additional countries **(current: 63 countries)**

At least 10 new countries codify legal self-determination of gender identity **(current: 18 countries)**

Marriage equality and/or other measures that recognize LGBTIQ families are achieved in 10 additional countries **(current: 37 countries with marriage equality)**

**Comprehensive laws are secured in at least 8 new countries prohibiting discrimination** on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics in employment, housing and access to essential services.

## Advance Economic Empowerment & Financial Inclusion

Advance the economic empowerment of LGBTIQ people on a large scale through educational, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities.

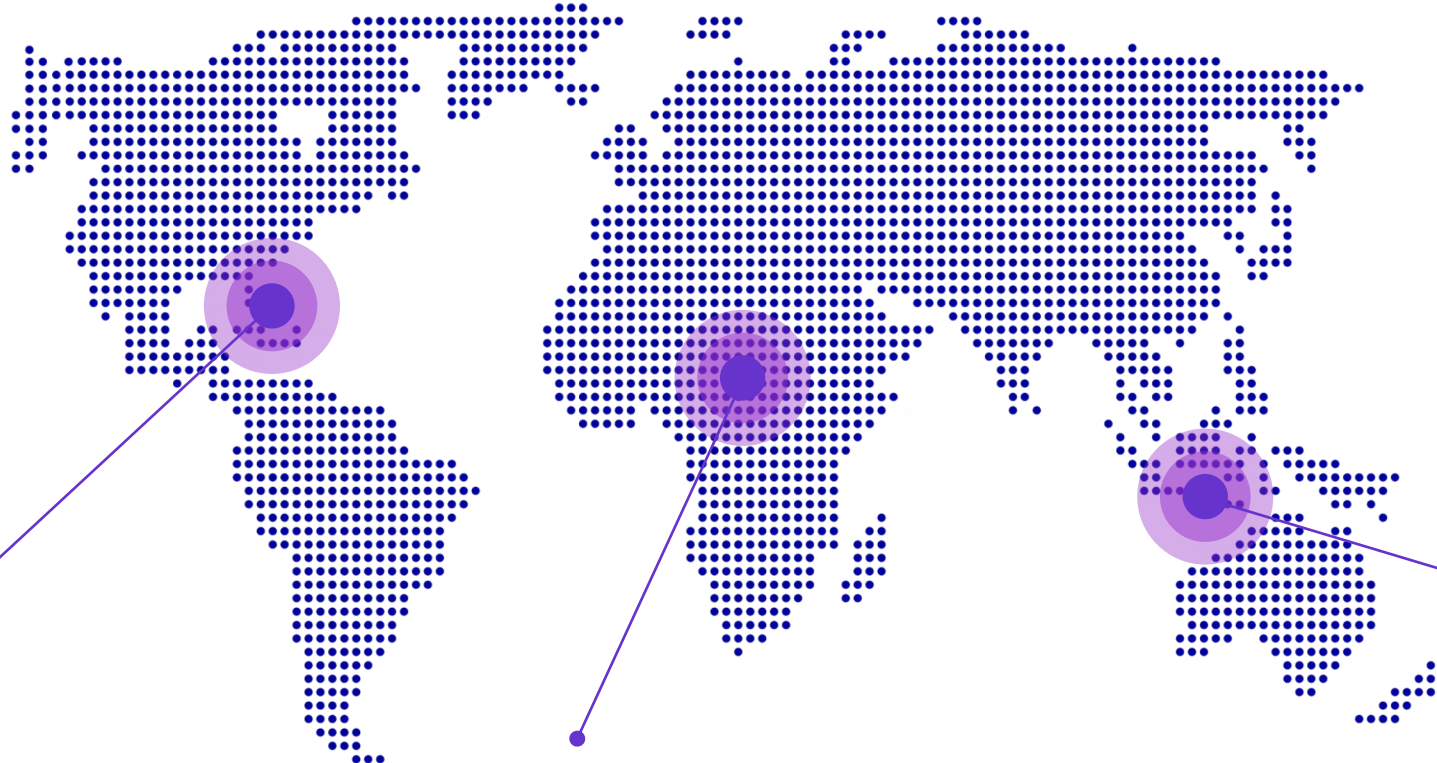
Inclusion of LGBTIQ populations in government programs funded by the World Bank **in at least 20 countries**, totalling 17 billion USD.

Public commitment of **at least 15 countries** to full inclusion of LGBTIQ communities in national development strategies.

Adoption of policies in **at least 10 countries** to increase access of LGBTIQ communities to financial services.

The creation of new models of community-based organizing including micro, small, and medium enterprises to increase the financial sustainability of the LGBTIQ movement and create increased livelihood opportunities for community members.

# 2024 Pilot Grants – Geographic Focus



## Latin America and Caribbean

In Latin America, we focused on the countries with the least access to funding to-date, including Paraguay, Panama, and Honduras.

## African Lusophone Countries:

LGBTIQ rights organizations in Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe, have historically had little access to international funding. Despite these challenges, some of these countries have made significant progress on LGBTIQ rights.

## South and Southeast Asian Countries

In Asia, our initial focus was on a subset of countries that have little or no international funding support to-date including Timor-Leste, Bhutan and Cambodia. While significant challenges remain, Bhutan and Timor-Leste have shown promising advances in LGBTIQ rights.

# Pilot Grants

**Outright announced the initial round of pilot grantees supported by *The Meridian Fund* in June 2024, funded by a seed contribution of \$500,000 from longtime donor and philanthropist Paul Albert.**

**“As a longtime supporter of Outright International, I have been consistently impressed by the quality and significance of its contributions to grassroots LGBTIQ groups worldwide. I am proud to make the lead gift to *The Meridian Fund*, which will propel the movement forward by offering a platform for other like-minded philanthropists to improve the lives of LGBTIQ+ people around the globe.”**

**- Paul Albert, Philanthropist**

- 13 grants to LGBTIQ civil society organizations in eight countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Average grant size = \$14,500. Half of the grants focused specifically on LBQ or trans-focused groups and projects.
- Grants supported various initiatives, including:
  - Human rights advocacy
  - Communications and public education
  - Community organizing/mobilization
  - Access to health
  - Economic empowerment
  - Organizational development and capacity building
- **Future grants will also focus on under-resourced countries and communities, a commitment to providing long-term, flexible support and the openness to adapt thematic grantmaking and respond to strategic opportunities and threats.** A second pilot round of funding will be awarded in fall 2024, with expanded grantmaking beginning in 2025.



# Voices of Partners

“Arcoiris Timor Leste is an LBT organization founded in 2020 with the mission of advancing the rights and dignity of lesbian and bisexual women and transmen. While still a small and young organization, Arcoiris has grown a lot since its founding four years ago. Funding from The Meridian Fund will support Arcoiris’ *A Step Towards Sustainability Project* which will focus on organizational development. The grant will also support Arcoiris’ role as co-host of this year’s Pride Parade.”

Bella Galhos, Arcoiris Timor-Leste  
2024 Pilot Grantee

“When we founded ECADE in 2016, the support from Outright helped us get off the ground quickly, The growth and impact of ECADE since have been even more incredible than I could have dreamed. The transformation happening across the Eastern Caribbean is changing lives. We celebrate recent decriminalization wins, but we are not stopping until all countries in the region live up to the promise of including and respecting all of us.”

Kenita Placide, Eastern Caribbean Alliance  
for Diversity and Equality  
Outright Partner & Grantee

# The Meridian Fund – Donor Benefits

“Intermediary funds play a vital role in justice movements. Combining funds from larger donors, intermediaries can provide flexible and multi-year funding to frontline organizations. Like the organizations they support, these funds have deep cultural and geographic ties to the communities they serve. Their priorities are shaped by frontline leaders; their strategies are place-based and culturally informed. Nimble and connected, intermediaries can respond in real time to emergent challenges and opportunities.”

-Candid Issue Lab

## Established Infrastructure and Precision Philanthropy:

- Outright possesses the expertise, experience, and relationships necessary to assure donors that resources are being utilized efficiently.
- The Meridian Fund offers an efficient giving mechanism, as we work closely with high-potential groups and leaders that would be very difficult to find and invest in independently.
- Through our established networks, grantmaking and financial systems, and experienced leadership, we ensure the successful transfer of funds and detailed impact reporting.

## Collaborative Network Building

- The Meridian Fund will provide opportunities and space for grantees and partners to connect within and across regions to discuss collective organizing strategies and messaging.
- We envision integrating grantees and partners into research projects to collect and document needed aggregate global and regional data and to offer opportunities for them to learn and join in advocacy efforts at the United Nations and with other key stakeholders.

## Donor Education and Engagement

- Supporters of The Meridian Fund will have opportunities to engage and learn about the issues facing LGBTIQ people around the world and trends and strategies activists and advocates are using to push forward in different countries and regions.
- We will offer opportunities for interested donors to engage with The Meridian Fund and our grantee portfolio beyond financial contributions, including application reviews, site visits, advocacy, and event participation, fostering a deeper connection with the movement.

# An Invitation to Join Us: Together, for Better LGBTIQ Lives

For many queer people, the stakes are life and death. The network of strategic and determined LGBTIQ activists, advocates, and allies is vibrant, growing, and making significant progress across the globe. With bold, sustained support, our movement can achieve exponential breakthroughs that will materially improve the lives of LGBTIQ people everywhere.

**We invite you to join us in bringing transformative resources directly to partners on the frontlines of the movement to support LGBTIQ communities. Our goal is raise \$100MM in new funding to significantly improve the lives of LGBTIQ individuals and transform the global landscape for LGBTIQ communities and activists over the next 10 years.**

**Individual and institutional funders who invest a minimum of \$500,000 will be recognized as Inaugural Partners** and will be acknowledged publicly in press releases, on social media and in print and online collateral.

We are committed to transparency and accountability and will provide regular updates, reports, and impact assessments to ensure donors are fully informed about the utilization and impact of their contributions.

For more information, or to set up a confidential discussion with our leadership team, contact:

**Katie Hultquist**, Director of Leadership Giving:  
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206-353-7756

# About Outright International

Founded in 1990, with staff in 19 countries, Outright works with the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies, and civil society partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations against LGBTIQ people, and advocate for inclusion and equality.



**We amplify.** We listen to LGBTIQ activists on the front lines. From Ukrainian activists helping their communities during the war to Caribbean activists fighting to overturn colonial-era laws banning same-sex relations, Outright amplifies their voices.

**We support.** In the last three years alone, Outright made more than \$7 million in grants supporting organizations in over 113 countries. We also provide strategic advice, training, networking, and connections to our local partners worldwide.

**We advocate.** We support a global movement that drives change across governments, institutions, businesses, and individuals. Outright holds consultative status at the United Nations where we serve as the secretariat of the UN LGBTI Core Group.

**We celebrate.** While our work is difficult, there is also much to celebrate. Legal wins decriminalizing same-sex relations in Singapore, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Mauritius, Dominica, and Namibia serve as recent examples of progress.



**“I think we have a responsibility as the queer community [and our allies] to fight everywhere we are. If some of our siblings are not free, none of us are free.”**

**– Steve Letsike, Outright Partner & Grantee, Member of the National Assembly of South Africa and Founder, Access Chapter 2**