



## Report on LGBTQ+ Refugee Blended Sponsorship Pilot

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on behalf of Rainbow Refugee Board of Directors  
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<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Rainbow Refugee</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>RRAP: LGBTQ+ Blended Sponsorship Beginnings</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Rationale &amp; Purpose</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Threats to the safety, rights and lives of LGBTQ+ people abroad</i>	5
<i>LGBTQ+ refugees face distinct systemic barriers to accessing protection &amp; resettlement</i>	5
<i>Canadian LGBTQ+ communities want to stand up for safety &amp; rights</i>	5
<i>LGBTQ+ Refugees face distinct settlement challenges</i>	5
<b>Personal Impacts –Sponsored Persons</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Personal Impacts-Sponsors</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Broader Impacts—Organizations, Communities, and Canadians</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Participation and resettlement across Canada</i>	8
<i>Cross-Pollination among SAHs and LGBTQ+ communities</i>	8
<i>Strengthening LGBTQ+ affirming Faith groups</i>	8
<i>Canada’s contribution to LGBTQ+ refugee protection</i>	8
<b>Overview of the RRAP</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Who is Sponsored through RRAP?</i>	9
<i>How are RRAP Sponsorships Organized?</i>	9
<i>Responsibility Sharing</i>	10
<i>Cost-Sharing Responsibilities</i>	11
<b>Challenges</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Prolonged waits in dangerous conditions</i>	12
<i>Uneven regional processing times</i>	12
<i>Access for women, transgender or gender diverse refugees.</i>	12
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>14</b>

## Executive Summary

Canada has a critical role to play as a place of safety, respect, and rights for those who have escaped persecution based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (SOGIE). In 1993, Canada was among the first countries to officially extend refugee protection to those facing SOGIE persecution. Since 2011, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ+) communities across Canada have shown solidarity and support by organizing sponsorships of LGBTQ+ refugees through the LGBTQ+ Refugee pilot, or Rainbow Refugee Resettlement Assistance Program (RRAP).

Rainbow Refugee Society (RRS), a Vancouver based organization with a 16 year track record of direct support and advocacy with LGBTQ+ refugees, has been proud to steward the RRAP since its inception. This blended private sponsorship agreement, announced on March 14, 2011, is an Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC) partnership with Rainbow Refugee Society (RRS). Initially a 3-year pilot, the RRAP was renewed annually. The current contract will end March 31, 2018. To build and sustain Canada's critical role in protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, we ask that all parties endorse the renewal, regularization and expansion of the LGBTQ+ blended sponsorship program.

In its first six years, the RRAP has successfully mobilized support for LGBTQ+ refugees. The first arrivals, a lesbian couple sponsored by Capital Rainbow Refuge, resettled in June 2012. By 2016, LGBTQ+ and allied Canadians had formed sponsorship circles in 14 municipalities including: Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, St Catharines, Kitchener, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, Nanaimo, and Salt Spring Island. As of April 15, 2017 75 RRAP sponsored refugees have arrived in Canada and a total of 87 applications completed.

LGBTQ+ Canadians understand the importance of mutual care and solidarity. For generations, LGBTQ+ people have formed chosen families to care for each other while strengthening our communities. The networks and knowledge of local LGBTQ+ communities enable RRAP Sponsorship Circles to offer practical, social and emotional supports responsive to the particular challenges LGBTQ+ refugees face. The networks of Sponsorship Circles and Rainbow Refugee open up LGBTQ+ friendly housing, job opportunities, professional supports, and social relationships. Many of the first individuals sponsored are now leading and serving local LGBTQ+ and refugee communities. The RRAP has sparked cooperation among refugee, Faith and LGBTQ+ organizations, enhancing all of our abilities to welcome LGBTQ+ refugees.

Canadian LGBTQ+ communities have stepped up—and want to do more. IRCCs matching contribution of \$300,000 has prompted RRAP Sponsorship Circles to raise over \$1.4 Million in support LGBTQ+ refugees. Making the RRAP a regular program with steady multi-year funding will allow groups across Canada to continue welcoming LGBTQ+ refugees while enabling Rainbow Refugee to build the program sustainably. Given rising backlashes against LGBTQ+ people in many countries and the systemic barriers LGBTQ+ refugees face in accessing refugee protection, Canada must continue and expand its commitment to resettlement of LGBTQ+ refugees.

# Rainbow Refugee

Formed in 2000, Rainbow Refugee was the first group in Canada focused on supporting people seeking refugee protection because of persecution related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (SOGIE) or HIV status.

We have a sixteen-year track record of direct work with LGBTQ+ refugees. Since 2001, we have supported refugee claimants through facilitated peer support, accompaniment, legal education and referrals. We liaise with settlement supports and offer knowledge exchange workshops to enhance the safety and community resources available to LGBTQ+. Rainbow Refugee peer-organizers deliver public education and outreach. We host monthly social gatherings that connect LGBTQ+ refugee newcomers with each other and with community resources.

We have built an all-volunteer organization from grassroots, with a cooperative governance board that leads working groups for each of our functions: Sponsorship, Inland Protection, Community engagement, education and advocacy. In 2011 we became a registered not-for-profit society. In January 2017, we became a registered Canada Revenue Agency charity.

Rainbow Refugee builds on the tradition of its sister organization LEGIT (Canadian Immigration for Same-Sex Partners) by using non-partisan means to advocate for fairness and equity for LGBTQ+ people in Canada's immigration and refugee policies and practices.

## RRAP: LGBTQ+ Blended Sponsorship Beginnings

In 2011 Rainbow Refugee was honoured to be invited to be the community partner in a pilot initiative of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, now Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The LGBTQ+ blended sponsorship agreement with Rainbow Refugee was announced by the Minister of Immigration on March 14, 2011 (<http://www.rstp.ca/en/special-initiatives/lgbti-refugee-sponsorship-pilot-project/>). Now known as the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program (RRAP), this initiative began as a three-year pilot (2011-2014) and has been extended annually. The current contract expires March 31, 2018.

Rainbow Refugee is asking that the LGBTQ+ Blended Sponsorship or RRAP not only be renewed but also be made into a regular program of the IRCC with multi-year funding commitments to enable longer-term planning and sustainable growth for the RRAP. This brief attests to the significant and on-going need for this program, the demonstrated willingness of LGBTQ+ communities to engage in sponsorship, and the community know-how developed during the first six years of the RRAP.

## **Rationale & Purpose**

### **Threats to the safety, rights and lives of LGBTQ+ people abroad**

At least 73 countries currently criminalize same-sex sexualities or gender diversity, with lengthy prison terms in many and the death penalty in 13 jurisdictions (ILGA, June 2016). In others morality or propaganda laws are used punitively against LGBTQ+ people. These laws are often the legacy of colonization, but remain powerful tools of repression and extortion. Political and religious backlashes have created spikes in homophobic and transphobic violence in many places; Chechna, Russia, Uganda and Bangladesh are recent examples. Homophobic or transphobic violence in families and social networks force people into deep hiding or exposing them to surveillance and threat in their own homes, neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces.

### **LGBTQ+ refugees face distinct systemic barriers to accessing protection & resettlement**

LGBTQ+ refugees forced to flee their countries of origin subsequently arrive in neighbouring countries that are often just as unsafe. For example, Kenya is a country of first asylum for LGBTQ+ Ugandans, yet Kenya maintains 14-year prison sentences against same-sex relationships. Even if LGBTQ+ asylum seekers can access a UNHCR office, they are rightfully worried about how safe they are to speak openly. The UNHCR acknowledges the heightened risk of sexual violence, assaults and extortion faced by LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, and their limited capacity to protect LGBTQ+ refugees. For these reasons, resettlement programs have had limited success identifying and resettling LGBTQ+ refugees. Before 2005, few LGBTQ+ refugees were identified for resettlement to Canada. LGBTQ+ Government Assisted Refugees were almost exclusively Iranian nationals. Since 2011, with the RRAP, LGBTQ+ refugees of 13 diverse nationalities and SOGIE identities have resettled in Canada.

### **Canadian LGBTQ+ communities want to stand up for safety & rights**

The RRAP program offers ordinary Canadians the opportunity to directly participate in the broader social movement to achieve human rights, safety and respect for LGBTQ+ people. Before 2011, Canadian LGBTQ+ communities were willing, but not ready or able to assist refugee resettlement. The RRAP is building capacity within LGBTQ+ communities to form sponsorships and support the settlement of LGBTQ+ refugees in their local communities. LGBTQ+ communities have responded, and in the process people who would not otherwise have been involved in refugee protection have become active participants and even leaders. Acting in solidarity with LGBTQ+ refugees reinforces awareness in our communities of shared struggles, shared humanity, and the importance of working to end all forms of oppression.

### **LGBTQ+ Refugees face distinct settlement challenges**

These challenges are often best met by a supportive LGBTQ+ community and their networks. Canadian LGBTQ+ communities are uniquely able to offer contacts with LGBTQ+-friendly housing, service providers and employers. We are able to initiate supportive conversations about issues like personal safety, access to gender transition supports, coming out at work, or healthy dating relationships comfortably and appropriately. These are unique settlement needs of LGBTQ+ refugees that existing SAH sponsors or settlement agencies are only beginning to understand and respond to.

## Personal Impacts –Sponsored Persons

*"It has meant family, support, having people I admire and looking forward to being there for them. It means LIFE" ~ Rasha*

*"As it's called a circle of hope. Before I came to Canada when I was in Beirut, It gave me hope in a better life knowing that there're people working on my cause and wanting to help. It helped keep me strong knowing that whatever I was going through will end soon. After I arrived to Vancouver most of them were really nice, supportive and helpful which was what I needed at the time as a newcomer. Going through that experience made me want to do the same and help others to have what I got." ~Aamer*

Pre-arrival, regular contact with their sponsorship circle members instills hope and reduces isolation. During the waits, Circles often support in practical ways: online language tutoring, trouble-shooting visa problems and offering basic financial support. When threats arise or assaults have occurred, Sponsorship Circles have sometimes been able to engage networks to find safer housing or other supports. Communication with IRCC has resulted in urgent interventions in some extreme emergencies.

As both Rasha and Aamer described, sponsored individuals become part of a community of care. Building a relationship online prior to arrival makes early arrival days less daunting. Canadian LGBTQ+ communities understand the necessity of mutually supportive relationships and solidarity. For many of us, chosen family is a way of life and a way of community building. Sponsorship, at its best, can create this. The day-to-day struggles of rebuilding lives is lightened when the work is shared and when trusted people are around for the big decisions and the unexpected. The networks of Sponsorship Circles and Rainbow Refugee open up LGBTQ+ friendly housing, job opportunities, professional supports, and social relationships. Many of the distinct settlement challenges of LGBTQ+ refugees are handled through conversations with Sponsorship Circle members: how to handle job interviews or "coming out" and gender pronouns at work, dating and sexual health, and neighbourhood safety

Both Rasha and Aamer are now self-sustaining and also contributing to their new communities. They are both working—using skills and education they brought with them, enhanced by short retraining and language upgrading classes. In BC, most RRAP sponsored persons obtained sustaining employment before the 12 months of RRAP Sponsorship were complete.

Finally, Rasha and Aamer are not unusual in their desire to reciprocate the support they received by contributing to LGBTQ+ and Refugee community building and rights. Giving of themselves, after receiving help, can be part of re-establishing a sense of belonging, efficacy, and meaning. In BC, several of the first sponsored persons are now employed in leadership roles in LGBTQ+ and Refugee serving organizations.

## Personal Impacts-Sponsors

*"It has been a wonderful privilege to have been involved with several Rainbow Refugee sponsorship circles. From the arrival of the first LGBT couple 30 months ago to now, it has been and still is a humbling experience for me to greet newcomers to Canada who arrive with their worldly possessions packed into one or two suitcases. These brave individuals are not only arriving to a safe and peaceful environment but to a ready-made "family" of sponsors. We have come to know and understand them from afar as they have come to know their sponsors via Skype or email long before they embark on their journey to Canada. We answer questions about the LGBT community and reassure them along the way that they can live openly and love whom they want in our country. As an example, only days after a gay couple arrived in Vancouver, I took them shopping to a drug store and we asked a store clerk for assistance. A discussion ensued and the clerk asked if they were visitors to Vancouver. When told they were from Syria he asked in a friendly way if they were brothers. Following a brief pause one of the men replied that no, they were actually boyfriends. His partner looked around to see if anyone was listening or watching and replied "I can't believe it...we can actually say this in public now!" and hugged his partner. The clerk looked on and said "Welcome to Canada guys". It was moment of shared pride and joy that I will never forget.*

*Finally, it is a bit of balancing act to support and guide these proud individuals without being overindulging or intrusive. What makes our sponsorships so gratifying is to see them obtain jobs, become self-sustaining and begin to flourish in the community." ~ David Salter*

Rainbow Refugee agreed to steward the Blended Sponsorship Agreement in part because we knew that LGBTQ+ Canadians were willing to act. Pre-2011, existing sponsorship programs were not drawing on or attracting LGBTQ+ members to refugee sponsorship in high numbers. We have been moved by the commitment Sponsorship Circles have shown. The RRAP has mobilized more than 800 people to engage in the direct work of Sponsorship. Thousands more have volunteered for fundraising or other supports. LGBTQ+ sports associations, student and community groups have organized creative awareness and fundraising events in support of the RRAP: roller derby, bingo, bowling, choral concerts, burlesque shows, and square dancing are a few.

Walking alongside LGBTQ+ newcomers as they rebuild lives has deepened many sponsors' appreciation of the value of the safety, respect and rights we live with in Canada. For many sponsors, relationships with sponsored persons caused them to reflect on the kinds of welcome LGBTQ+ people of diverse cultural, racial, religious and language backgrounds would receive in community events, spaces and cities. It has raised awareness and deepened commitment to work to address exclusions in our own communities.

## **Broader Impacts—Organizations, Communities, and Canadians**

### **Participation and resettlement across Canada**

LGBTQ+ communities in 14 municipalities across Canada, from Halifax to Salt Spring Island, are engaged in LGBTQ+ refugee sponsorship. There are 19 “Circles of Hope” active in BC alone. Ottawa’s Capital Rainbow Refuge has mentored multiple circles in Ontario. Toronto groups like Rainbow Railroad and the Metropolitan Community Church have been enthusiastic sponsors. Another benefit of this national program is that LGBTQ+ refugees are being welcomed into smaller municipalities like Halifax, Victoria, Nanaimo, Kitchener, St Catharines and Salt Spring Island.

### **Cross-Pollination among SAHs and LGBTQ+ communities**

Sponsorship Circles with the RRAP must work with an existing Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). SAHs have been very supportive and willing to work with Rainbow Refugee on the RRAP program. This is in large part due to the fact that refugees sponsored through the RRAP do not impact the SAHs’ caps on numbers of sponsorships. The SAH ensures fiduciary responsibilities are met and in some cases supports capacity building with constituent groups. While helping LGBTQ+ communities across Canada participate in sponsorship, SAHs have become more aware and responsive to LGBTQ+ protection and settlement issues. The following SAHs have been involved to date: United Church of Canada, Unitarian Church, Metropolitan Community Church, Immigrant services of Nova Scotia and Inter-Cultural Association of Victoria.

### **Strengthening LGBTQ+ affirming Faith groups**

Through the RRAP, faith communities are acting on their commitment to being LGBTQ+ affirming places of worship. United Church, Unitarian and Presbyterian Congregations and a Jewish Synagogue have chosen to sponsor LGBTQ+ refugees. In some cases, these sponsorships are also expressions of inter-faith solidarity.

### **Canada’s contribution to LGBTQ+ refugee protection**

Private sponsorship is a “made in Canada” response to refugee settlement that has garnered praise internationally. The RRAP is unique globally, and an opportunity for Canada to make a distinct contribution to LGBTQ+ safety and rights. In a global context where countries in the Global South are sustaining over 80% of the forcibly displaced and refugee populations, Canada could, and should, be doing more to share in the responsibility of refugee protection. Canada can contribute internationally by doing more of what distinctly does well. In the 1990s Canada was among the first countries to recognize the need to protect the safety of LGBTQ+ refugees. Committing to the RRAP plays a small but critical role in creating greater safety for LGBTQ+ refugees globally. The RRAP and the Immigration and Refugee Board’s new SOGIE guidelines are examples of the kinds of leadership role Canada can and should play.

## Overview of the RRAP

### Who is Sponsored through RRAP?

75 sponsored newcomers have arrived by April 15, 2017. An additional 12 applications have been submitted. Most applicants are individuals, but RRAP circles have also sponsored couples and small families. For example, a lesbian and her sister, and a gay father and his daughter have been sponsored.

**Place of Origin.** Individuals from the following countries have been sponsored. Syria (30), Iran (20), Iraq (5), Uganda (5) and 1-3 persons from: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Russia, Palestine, Yemen

**Criteria** In keeping with the Geneva Convention definition of a Refugee, sponsored individuals must be outside their country of origin before an application can proceed. For the RRAP, individuals must demonstrate that: 1) their persecution is related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and 2) that their current country of residence is not a durable solution. Many of the applicants are referred through organizations working with LGBTQ+ individuals in local regions.

### How are RRAP Sponsorships Organized?

1) Interested groups or individuals contact Rainbow Refugee. Rainbow Refugee provides an orientation to sponsorship, including the responsibilities of sponsorship. We recommend groups of 8-10, and require that groups include members of local LGBTQ+ communities. In Ontario, experienced Sponsorship groups like Capital Rainbow Refugee mentor and support newer groups in consultation with Rainbow Refugee.

2) A group only officially becomes a Sponsorship Circle, after all members review the code of ethics, discuss case examples, sign the code of ethics and agree to rolls and decision making process with the support of a Rainbow Refugee mentor.

3) A match is made. Three anonymized cases are given to the group.

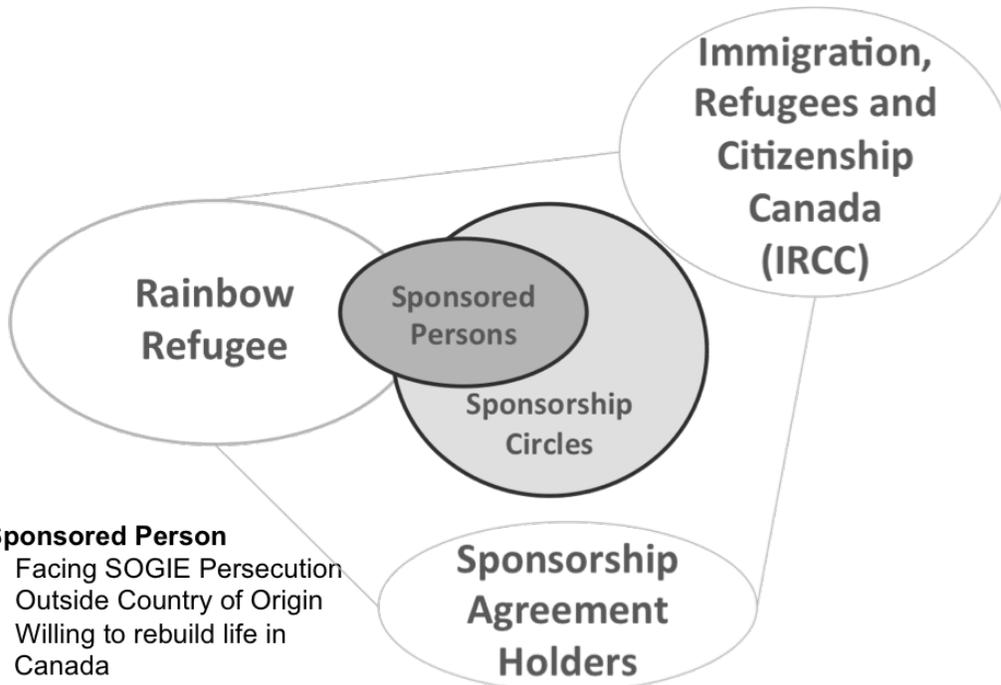
4) Selected members of the Sponsorship Circle 1) maintain regular contact with the Sponsored Person and 2) work with the Sponsored Person to complete all parts of the application: Undertaking of Assistance including the Settlement Plan, personal information and narrative, and research on the country of origin and country of asylum.

5) Sponsorship Circle fundraises 75% of the funds needed before submitting the application. These funds are held in trust by the SAH for the Sponsored Person.

6) The complete application is reviewed by Rainbow Refugee prior to submission to IRCC.

# Overview of RRAP

## Responsibility Sharing



### Sponsored Person

- Facing SOGIE Persecution
- Outside Country of Origin
- Willing to rebuild life in Canada

### Rainbow Refugee

- Hosts introductory info-sessions for people considering sponsoring an individual (or couple, or family)
- Introduces Sponsorship Circles to profiles of potential Sponsored Persons
- Mentors/offers assistance to Sponsorship Circles through all parts of the sponsorship process
- Reviews all applications prior to submission
- Liaises between SAH and IRCC

### Sponsorship Circles

- Agree to Follow Code of Ethics
- Build relationship with Sponsored Person
- Complete application
- Raise funds (\$20,000/ person)
- Offer Practical, Social & Emotional Support during 1st year of settlement

### SAH

- Ensures financial commitments are met
- For some Circles offers support and mentorship

### IRCC

- 3 months of settlement support & start-up funds per individual application
- Processing Applications
- Trouble Shooting Urgent Cases

## Overview of RRAP

### Cost-Sharing Responsibilities

The blended private sponsorship initiative entails a cost sharing arrangement between CIC/IRCC and private sponsors. For each sponsored person, CIC/IRCC commits to providing three months of financial support and start-up costs at rates comparable to other privately sponsored refugees. Constituent groups raise the remaining nine months of support and take on the full 12-month commitment to provide practical, social and emotional settlement support.

Because provincial social assistance rates are often lower than the cost of living, Rainbow Refugee encourages sponsoring groups to raise more than the minimum required (which would be \$6,606 per person in BC). Before applications are submitted, the SAHs require groups to have 75% of the required funds in the bank, held in trust for the individual.

On average, sponsoring groups have raised \$20,000 per person. This amount is approximate because of geographic and family size difference. Donations in kind, including housing, were also raised by groups.

Four of the individuals were both Blended and Visa Office Referrals (BVORs) and RRAP sponsored. Through an agreement between RRS and the IRCC RAP, three of the six months of funding that BVORs receive currently come from the Rainbow RAP budget. Constituent groups for RRAP/BVOR sponsorships are responsible for raising six months of financial support (approximately \$4,404) and are encouraged to raise more than this amount. On average, groups sponsoring the four LGBTQ+ BVOR arrivals raised \$10,000 per individual.

As the summary below shows, federal funds of under \$300,000 dollars have encouraged community fundraising initiatives resulting in approximately \$1.4 million dollars. All federal funds go to sponsored refugees. Rainbow Refugee does not receive or use any federal money for administration.

#### CIC/IRCC:

3 months financial support for 75 individuals \$734.00/month X 3 months X 75 individuals	\$165, 150.00
Furniture/Household goods for 75 individuals \$1,500 X 75 individuals	<u>\$112,500.00</u>
	\$277,650.00
<b>Constituent Groups</b>	
\$20,000 per individual for 72 individuals (\$ 6,606 /individual is required)	\$1,440,000.00
\$10,000 per individual for 3 BVOR	<u>\$30,000.00</u>
Estimated funds raised for RRAP sponsored refugees	\$1,470,000.00

# Challenges

## **Prolonged waits in dangerous conditions**

Even after they are matched with a sponsorship circle, refugees face long waits before arriving in Canada. Processing times in some regions are 4-6 years or more. LGBTQ+ refugees face extreme threats to their safety and lives because of homophobic and transphobic violence in countries of first asylum. UNHCR refugee camps that provide basic necessities are often dangerously hostile for LGBTQ+ refugees, and so LGBTQ+ refugees struggle to support themselves in urban settings. In both Turkey and Kenya, countries of first asylum, LGBTQ+ asylum seekers have been murdered. Kidnappings, assaults and extortion are very real and present threats for LGBTQ+ refugees waiting for resettlement. Rainbow Refugee urges IRCC to create more efficient processing, to work with international partners to promote the safety of LGBTQ+ asylum seekers abroad, and to recognize the heightened risk faced by LGBTQ+ asylum seekers when making assessments for expedited processing.

## **Uneven regional processing times**

The processing times for applications vary remarkably between regions: from under a year for some Syrians in Turkey, to six years in South East Asia, and eight years in Kenya. LGBTQ+ refugees struggle to stay alive and Sponsorship Circles struggle to sustain energy and commitment during multi-year waits. As a result, some RRAP Sponsorship Circles use regional wait times as criteria for selecting who they will sponsor, exacerbating inequities in access to refugee protection. The long processing times at the Nairobi processing centre have limited the number of RRAP sponsorships of people from African countries, despite the precarities and danger LGBTQ+ refugees face there. The Syrian initiative demonstrated that resettlement can be conducted more efficiently. Rainbow Refugee urges IRCC to do all it can to shorten and equalize processing times. We would welcome a focused effort to expedite resettlement of LGBTQ+ refugees currently waiting in Kenya.

## **Access for women, transgender or gender diverse refugees.**

Reaching Canada's borders is impossible for many of the people most in need of refugee protection. Among LGBTQ+ refugees, women and transpeople face heightened obstacles to accessing refugee protection: legal barriers to mobility because women and transpeople with female identity documents often need parental permission to travel; less access to study or work permits; heightened screening at borders. Rainbow Refugee hoped RRAP sponsorships would enable more women and transpeople to gain safety in Canada. We have had some success in encouraging sponsorship of people with the least mobility. Rainbow Refugee has used undesignated donations to supplement their fundraising efforts of groups sponsoring lesbian or gender diverse refugees. We will continue to give attention to equity of access to sponsorship. A federal commitment to the RRAP as a regular program, enhance our capacity to proactively address these inequities.

## Recommendations

Rainbow Refugee ultimately envisions a world free of homophobic and transphobic persecution. Until this aim is realized, refugee protection is a critical safety net for those impacted by SOGIE persecution. The problems that create the need for the RRAP are longstanding and complex. The systemic constraints that impede LGBTQ+ refugees from accessing refugee protection and resettlement will take concerted, longterm collaborative international and intersectoral work. In the meantime, a commitment to the RRAP is a small but critical means for enhancing access to safety and rights for LGBTQ+ people who have fled SOGIE persecution.

Continuing to invest in the RRAP enables civil society organizations like Rainbow Refugee to:

- Identify LGBTQ+ refugees who face heightened risk in countries of asylum and reduced access to UNHCR protections
- Support the safety of LGBTQ+ refugees awaiting resettlement
- Encourage members of LGBTQ+ communities across Canada to take part in refugee settlement
- Provide community supports that respond to the distinct challenges LGBTQ+ refugees face
- Collaboratively enhance the potential for Canadian communities to welcome LGBTQ+ refugees

We recommend maintaining the features of the RRAP that work

- Blended sponsorship agreement in which IRCC provides 3 months plus start-up funds
- Collaboration with SAHs without impacting SAHs caps
- Members of LGBTQ+ communities comprise Sponsorship Circles, allies welcome!
- Matching and mentorship provided by Rainbow Refugee and designated experienced organizations like Capital Rainbow Refuge
- Application trouble-shooting and review provided by local mentors and Rainbow Refugee

Making the RRAP a regular program, with on-going multi-year funding commitments would enable Rainbow Refugee to:

- Build and grow the program sustainably: hire a dedicated sponsorship administrator with a multi-year commitment, train additional mentors
- Strengthen partnerships across Canada and internationally
- Promote the program to potential sponsors more robustly
- Sponsor individuals from regions with longer processing times
- Conduct on-going evaluation of process and outcomes

To protect the safety and lives of LGBTQ+ refugees prior to resettlement:

- Implement efficient processing of sponsorship applications in Canada
- Reduce processing times for overseas applications across the board
- Aim for equity across regions
- Build relationships and provide support to civil society organizations that promote the safety of LGBTQ+ refugees in countries of asylum
- Support UNHCR efforts to hire and train staff that can provide culturally safe responses for LGBTQ+ refugees
- Support UNHCR efforts to assess risks related to Sexual Orientation Gender Identity and Express (SOGIE) in their Heightened Vulnerability Screening.

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Deep respect to each sponsored person who has taught us  
the power of courage, hope and tenacity