

LGBTQIA+ Rights



→ *Gender Justice*

Impressum

Brot für die Welt
Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie
und Entwicklung e.V.

Caroline-Michaelis-Straße 1
10115 Berlin, Germany

Phone +49 30 65211 0
info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de
www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de

Authors Fachgruppe
Gendergerechtigkeit,
Farina Hoffmann, Tina Kleiber,
Mareike Haase, Lars Bedurke,
Helle Døssing, Martin Groß-Bickel
Editors Michael Billanitsch,
Farina Hoffmann

**Responsible according to German
press law** Dr. Jörn Grävingholt
Layout Lena Appenzeller
Art.-No. 129 503 300

Donations

Brot für die Welt
Bank für Kirche und Diakonie
IBAN: DE10 1006 1006 0500 5005 00
BIC: GENODED1KDB

Berlin, September 2025

Annex I to the “Achieving gender equality” Policy¹

LGBTQIA+ Rights

1. Context

Following decades of liberalisation, we are increasingly seeing a rise in national legislation that discriminates against and endangers lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* and intersex, queer, asexual and agender (LGBTQIA+) people around the world. Such legal and political framework conditions lead to prejudice, fear, persecution and even murder. They prevent LGBTQIA+ people from exercising their basic human rights, including the right to life, physical integrity, freedom, security, medical care, education and information, dignified work and protection from discrimination. Upholding gender justice is closely linked to opportunities for social participation and is essential for protecting human rights and democracy.

Religious actors influence social norms. They can therefore play an important role in supporting emancipatory practices related to gender, sexuality, family planning and reproductive justice, but in many cases they do not.

Brot für die Welt is committed to supporting human rights and justice. We firmly believe that respect for human dignity and fostering inclusive, emancipatory societies are among the fundamental principles of Christian action. A crucial prerequisite in this regard is that everyone has the right to physical and sexual integrity and autonomy, as well as reproductive justice² for all.

All over the world, there is and always has been a diversity of sexualities, gender identities, lifestyles, family models and sexual characteristics. Colonialism and missionary work have contributed significantly to the enforcement of a binary, heteronormative and patriarchal system in both the past and the present. This has led to incredible suffering for queer people worldwide. In this annex to the Gender Policy, we set out our position on the human rights to which all people are entitled, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender

expression or sexual characteristics (SOGIESC). We endeavour to take a decolonial approach to our responsibilities in relation to colonialism while advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people worldwide and for sexual and reproductive rights for all.

2. LGBTQIA+ Rights Under Pressure Across the World

The rights of LGBTQIA+ people are being violated throughout the world, with examples including the criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations, so-called conversion therapies, restrictions on fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, forced medical interventions (intersex genital mutilation, forced sterilisation), bans on gender-affirming care and transition, bans on adoption, bans on dissemination of information, and discrimination, hatred and violence up to and including murders. Only nine countries worldwide protect intersex minors from medical interventions³ without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Another state criminalisation strategy is the prosecution of LGBTQIA+ organisations. This includes “foreign agent” laws, which restrict not only LGBTQIA+ groups but also civil society as a whole and sometimes even categorise the LGBTQIA+ movement as extremist. In Poland, Italy and other European countries, attempts are being made to restrict the rights of queer people. Even the right to information, in the form of age-appropriate sex education at school with non-discriminatory reference to SOGIESC, is restricted in many countries. For a long time, Germany had difficulties with introducing laws that put queer people on an equal footing. At the same time, queer people in Germany are increasingly facing significant threats.

1 — Profil 23: Policy Achieving gender equality, Brot für die Welt and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, 2018
<https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/downloads/profil23/>

2 — Reproductive justice is a concept developed by Black feminists that focuses on aspects of justice relating to sexual and reproductive rights.

3 — <https://database.ilga.org/interventions-intersex-minors>

Alongside a decades-long trend towards decriminalising LGBTQIA+ people and opening up marriage, there is now once again a trend towards deepening discrimination through legislation. In Iraq, Indonesia and Uganda, penalties for consensual same-sex relations have recently been introduced and/or further tightened. In particular, the Anti-Homosexuality Act that was passed in Uganda in 2023 is an extremely restrictive piece of legislation that criminalises even “suspected” homosexuality, forces confidants to denounce each other and thus makes even advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people a criminal offence, and provides for severe penalties. Parliaments in many countries are already discussing or actively pushing through legislation to criminalise LGBTQIA+. In some countries, civil society only managed to decriminalise homosexual acts through strategic litigation. Examples include Botswana, India, Namibia and Nepal. As fundamentalist movements and right-wing extremism grow in influence, LGBTQIA+ rights are increasingly under threat and rates of anti-queer violence are rising. This worrying trend is evident in Europe in particular.

The stigmatisation of LGBTQIA+ people by politicians, journalists and religious representatives especially creates an environment in which discrimination and violence gain broad social acceptance. Resistance is severely punished and those affected live in a climate of fear, ostracism and danger. Homosexuality, for example, is placed in a close, almost causal relationship with child abuse by homohostile actors. The distinction between consensual homosexual acts between adults on the one hand and sexualised violence and paedophilia on the other is deliberately blurred in order to create hostility towards LGBTQIA+ people and their rights.

Civil society’s scope for action is shrinking drastically (shrinking space): defenders of human rights, who campaign for sexual and reproductive rights and the human rights of LGBTQIA+ people, are persecuted and murdered. In some countries, they are accused of imposing “Western values” and a colonial mindset, with the alleged aim of “propagating” homosexuality. This accusation is also echoed in historical and theological discourses: some

churches approve of the continued outlawing of diverse, same-sex lifestyles. They ignore how a queer and non-binary gender order was rejected and fought against in the course of colonial and missionary history, and ignore the colonial origins of legislation prohibiting consensual same-sex acts.

Some church leaders, in unison with other religious authorities, are staunchly opposed to the recognition of human rights irrespective of one’s SOGIESC, and are committed to discriminatory and criminalising laws based on biblical and other religious texts. Right-wing movements that are primarily financed from and based in Europe, the USA and Russia, and that often have close links to neo-Pentecostal and fundamentalist Christian movements, orchestrate campaigns against queer people worldwide. The retention of colonial laws is presented as a sign of resistance against the Global North. A reduction in international funding is consciously accepted as a consequence.

3. What Guides Us

We recognise that human rights apply universally and must be protected. This applies regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sexual characteristics, and is in keeping with international human rights standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We oppose cultural or religious practices that restrict bodily integrity and autonomy. We call on governments worldwide to repeal discriminatory laws, ensure sexual and reproductive rights for all and implement the Yogyakarta Principles⁴ into law.

Bread for the World’s work is based on the fundamental conviction that all people are created in God’s image, born free and equal in dignity. Loving devotion is unconditional, centres the needs of people and places those most in need and marginalised to the fore – including LGBTQIA+ people. A number of biblical quotations and interpretations in the core Brot für die Welt documents capture this theological conviction, including:

4 — Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics <https://yogyakartaprinciples.org/>

- “Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus.” (Colossians 3:17). As part of the Protestant Church, we share the Christian tradition’s basic conviction that faith, life and action form a unity. Our mission is to be a witness, sign and instrument of God’s unconditional love for all creation and especially for the poor and marginalised, helping them to live their lives in dignity. For in them we encounter Jesus Christ himself (Matthew 25:40). Actions that unconditionally recognise and protect the dignity of others affirm this mission. (Brot für die Welt Code of Conduct)
- Every human being is wanted and loved by God, is uniquely created in the image of God and is therefore endowed with indestructible value and dignity (based on Genesis 1:26).⁵
- The principles that guide our understanding of ourselves as Christians are based on an appreciation of the uniqueness and equality of all humanity (in accordance with Galatians 3:28) and the dignity of every person. (EWDE Diversity Concept)

Bread for the World’s theological understanding of itself, fully in keeping with the biblical message and the unconditional option for the poor, does not see poor and marginalised people as powerless and merely disenfranchised recipients of aid, but as people who contribute to a just and sustainable world. Bread for the World is aware that many churches reject or question the assertion that queer people are made in God’s image. We are also aware that missions and colonialism have elevated a Eurocentric image of humanity, shaped by time and culture, to an exclusive and global norm. The diversity of gender options in many societies was also violently fought against, suppressed and erased from people’s memories by the Christian mission. This leads us as a German, Christian and European organisation to the conviction that part of

our decolonial duty must be to defend the dignity of queer people worldwide in a careful, dialogical and respectful manner and to heal the wounds of colonial crimes and colonial continuities.

Bread for the World also shapes and puts its human rights-based approach to LGBTQIA+ rights and sexual and reproductive rights into practice through its membership of various networks. Breaking down patriarchal power structures based on faith is a core objective of our membership of the ACT Alliance.⁶ The World Council of Churches reflects the differences in the positions of its member churches, but in its document “Conversations on the Pilgrim Way”⁷ calls on them to engage in difficult dialogues. The Global Interfaith Network for People of all Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions (GIN SSOGIE) has been committed to interfaith dialogue on LGBTQIA+ human rights for a decade now.⁸

4. Guidance for Collaboration with Partner Organisations

Bread for the World bases its financial cooperation and collaboration with partners on the fundamental values of universal human rights and principles such as the 2030 Agenda and its principle of “leaving no one behind”.⁹ No one should be left behind or discriminated against on the grounds of gender, religion or sexual orientation. Queer people must not be denied their right to practise their religion due to discrimination.

This basic tenet is also set out in concrete terms in the code of conduct, a binding annex to our agreements on cooperation with partner organisations, which includes the principles of the inviolability of the dignity of all people, protection of human rights, respect for the diversity of religions, world views and cultures, participation and inclusion.

⁵ — https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/mediapool/60_Jahre/Dossier_Schwerpunkt_Heft_02.pdf (available in German only)

⁶ — <https://actalliance.org/gender-justice/>

⁷ — <https://oikoumene.org/resources/publications/conversations-on-the-pilgrim-way>

⁸ — <https://gin-ssogie.org/>

⁹ — <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

Bread for the World supports the important work of the many actors within its partnerships who are explicitly attempting to counter hostility towards LGBTQIA+ people and promote diverse faith practices in Christian communities. The special responsibilities of the churches are also taken on by our partners. They initiate moderated dialogues between church councils and LGBTQIA+ civil society. These dialogues are dedicated to theological work on the role of LGBTQIA+ people in a biblical context, dealing with queer people and discrimination in their communities and initiating a path of reconciliation and respect for the dignity of all people.

We actively promote and encourage open and respectful dialogue with governments, religious leaders, civil society organisations, LGBTQIA+ led organisations, parishes and local communities. This dialogue is intended to reduce prejudice, counter violence, dispel misunderstandings, promote respect for and the end of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people and ensure sexual and reproductive justice for all. We endeavour to have constructive discussions that acknowledge our colonial history.

Bread for the World supports policies and strategies taken by the German government, including the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Federal Foreign Office (AA), which explicitly deal with the marginalisation of LGBTQIA+ people and emphasise the need to empower and promote them (for instance, through the LGBTI Inclusion Strategy, Feminist Development Policy, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2023¹⁰, and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development Africa Strategy, 2023¹¹).

4.1. Financial or Personal Cooperation with Partners with a Hostile/Discriminatory Attitude Towards LGBTQIA+ People

If during our cooperation with partner organisations we discover that their representatives hold opinions and values either publicly or in our specific collaboration that

are not compatible with the values of Bread for the World mentioned above, we enter into a dialogue with the leadership of the partner organisation and try to work out a common basis. This dialogue may take place in a confidential space, with the participation of local and regional experts on dialogue formats on LGBTQIA+ rights in Christian environments. This approach is based around a decolonial practice. In so doing, we are building on the important work of feminist theologians and Christian and secular LGBTQIA+ networks, which have been seeking out and shaping these dialogues for decades. We use our advisory bodies, such as the Global Reference Group, to prepare for this dialogue critically and in close alignment with our understanding of partnership.

If it is not possible to identify common values and approaches to respecting the dignity of LGBTQIA+ people despite this dialogue, the partnership will not be entered into for the present or will be terminated or even broken off. Bread for the World cannot and will not promote any organisations or activities that incite or actively contribute to the discrimination, stigmatisation or persecution of LGBTQIA+ people.

4.2. Support for Local Actors Who Stand up for the Dignity and Rights of LGBTQIA+ People

Bread for the World actively supports local LGBTQIA+-led church organisations and other civil society organisations that work for sexual and reproductive justice and the human dignity of LGBTQIA+ people. This work can involve lobbying and advocacy at local, national and international level, empowerment and self-organisation, support for human rights-based dialogue processes, training and curriculum development or legal or psychosocial consultation and support. Bread for the World works alongside organisations and networks that pursue similar objectives. Supporting local actors who can initiate processes for social and political change in their own context is often more effective than approaches from the Global North, which can be perceived as an expression of Western dominance and unequal power

¹⁰ — Feminist Development Policy, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2023

¹¹ — Shaping the Future with Africa, Africa Strategy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2023
Africa Strategy of the BMZ, 2023

relations. We consider church actors, who are close to the people in many regions, to be particularly important in this regard.

5. Call and Invitation

With this annex, we reaffirm our human rights-based commitment to LGBTQIA+ rights and sexual and reproductive rights and invite our partner organisations and other Christian actors to join us on this journey.

Brot für die Welt
Evangelisches Werk für
Diakonie und Entwicklung e.V.

Caroline-Michaelis-Straße 1
10115 Berlin

Phone +49 30 65211 0
info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de
www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de