

# Strengthening Services for LGBT Refugees & Asylees

The Rainbow Welcome Initiative

March 21, 2013

9<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Placement Consultation Meeting



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**ALLIANCE**  
INTERNATIONAL

# LGBT Refugees

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) individuals who flee their homes because of persecution they suffered as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- LGBT individuals who resettle in the United States under a different claim not relating to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Reasons for fleeing
  - State-sponsored violence
  - Community violence
  - Family and domestic violence





# LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS IN THE WORLD

ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association

MAY 2011

## PERSECUTION 76 countries & 5 entities

Death penalty  
5 countries and parts of Nigeria and Somalia  
Imprisonment/Corporal punishment  
76 countries and 5 entities\*

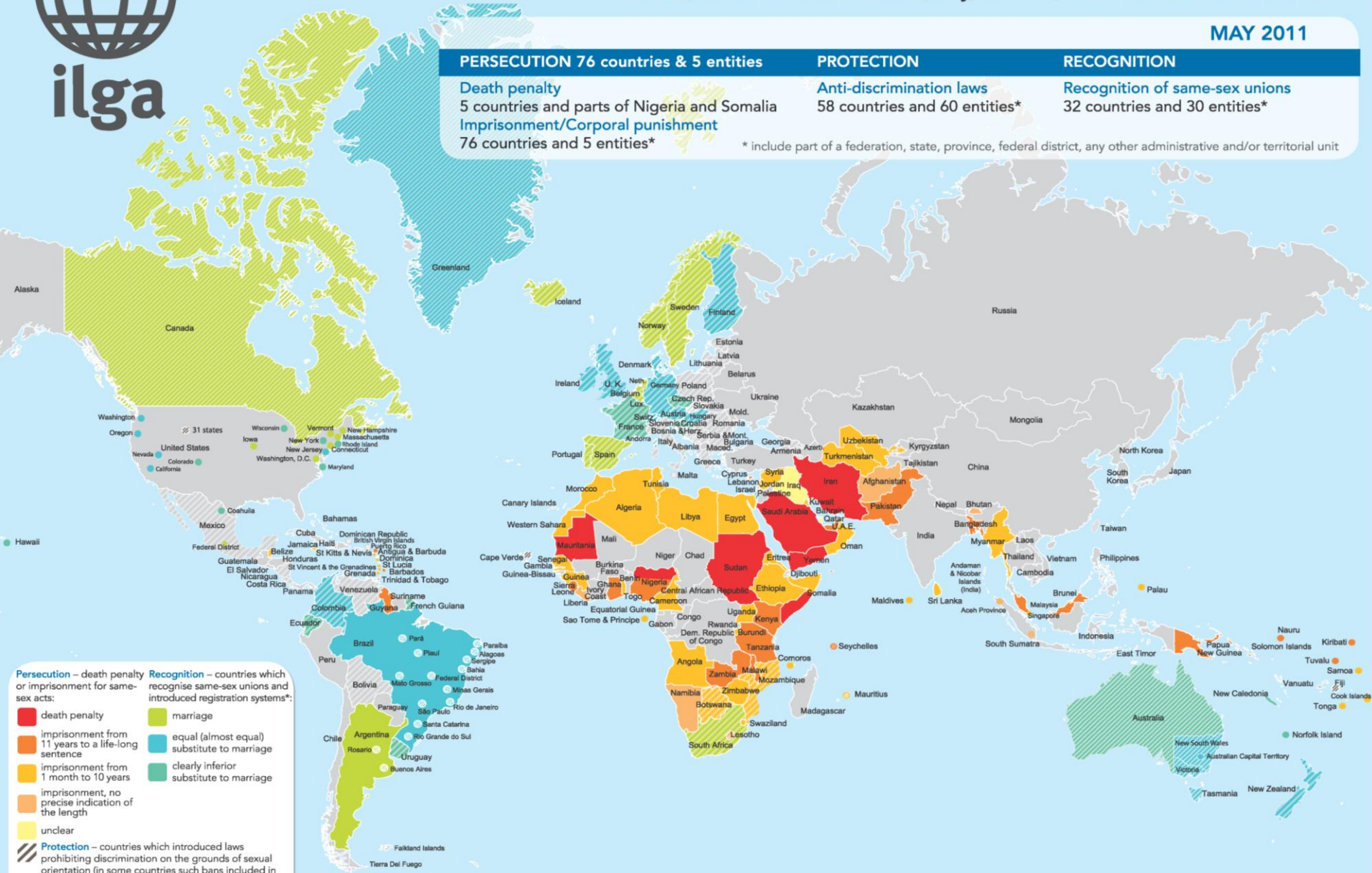
## PROTECTION

Anti-discrimination laws  
58 countries and 60 entities\*

## RECOGNITION

Recognition of same-sex unions  
32 countries and 30 entities\*

\* include part of a federation, state, province, federal district, any other administrative and/or territorial unit



**Persecution – death penalty or imprisonment for same-sex acts:**

- death penalty
- imprisonment from 11 years to a life-long sentence
- imprisonment from 1 month to 10 years
- imprisonment, no precise indication of the length
- unclear

**Recognition – countries which recognise same-sex unions and introduced registration systems\*:**

- marriage
- equal (almost equal) substitute to marriage
- clearly inferior substitute to marriage

**Protection – countries which introduced laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (in some countries such bans included in national constitutions and in some countries in other laws; areas of protection from discrimination vary).**

■ No specific legislation

■ \* this category also includes some Australian entities which have no registration systems.

These laws are aimed at lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and at same-sex activities and relationships. At times, they also apply to trans and intersex people. This edition of the world map (May 2011) was coordinated by Stephen Barris (ILGA). Design: Laurence Colson. Data represented in this map is based on "State-Sponsored Homophobia: a world survey of laws criminalising same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults - 2011", an ILGA report by Eddie Bruce-Jones & Lucas Paoli Itaborahy (available on [www.ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org) in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French). ILGA thanks groups which contributed to the annual update.

# Issues of (non)disclosure

- Barriers to self-identifying and disclosure
  - Concerns for safety
  - Internalized homophobia
  - Different conceptualization of sexuality or gender
- Encouraging program participants to disclose information pertaining to sexual orientation / gender identity
  - Building trust
  - Giving an incentive
  - Creating 'safe' spaces

# Creating a Safe Space

- Inclusive language
  - Conversations
  - Intake paperwork
- Physical markers
- Confidentiality
  - Interpretation considerations



# Protection Concerns

- Family violence
  - Child is gender non-conforming or involved in a same-sex relationship
  - Family members feel like they failed; fear loss of status in community
  - Risk of coerced marriage or violence
- Intimate partner violence
  - Underreported
  - Risks and barriers for LGBT couples
- Community violence
  - Harassment within immigrant community
  - Hate crimes
  - Teen bullying



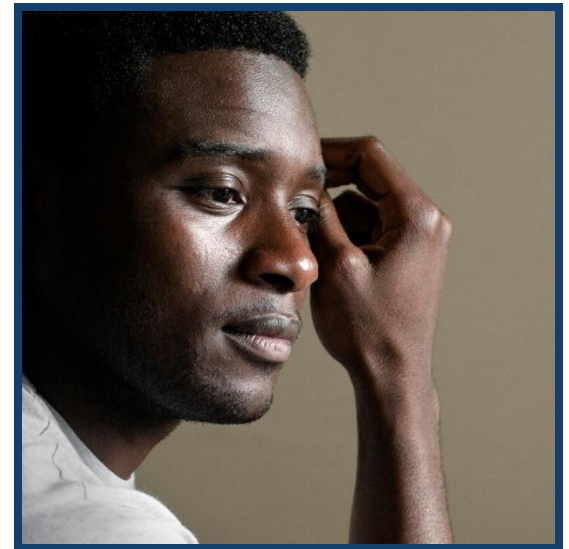
# Case Management

- Housing
  - Location
  - Roommates
- Employment
  - Participants' reservations
  - “LGBT-friendly” workplaces
    - Partnerships



# Health

- Sexual health
- Gender identity and healthcare
- Mental health
  - Traumatic stress
  - Torture treatment
  - LGBT-affirming mental health providers





# Asylees

- Barriers to gaining immigration status
  - Lack access to information on legal proceedings
    - One year filing deadline
  - Detention
    - Segregation
    - Sexual abuse
- Barriers to connecting to refugee resettlement agencies
  - Unaware of services
  - Different set of needs
- Need to strengthen ties between legal service providers and resettlement affiliates

# Community Integration

- Double marginalization and continued isolation
- Teaching Tolerance
  - Cultural orientation
  - ESL classes
  - Ambassador allies
- Connecting participants to external resources
  - Faith-based support
  - Recreational / academic interests
  - LGBT organizations

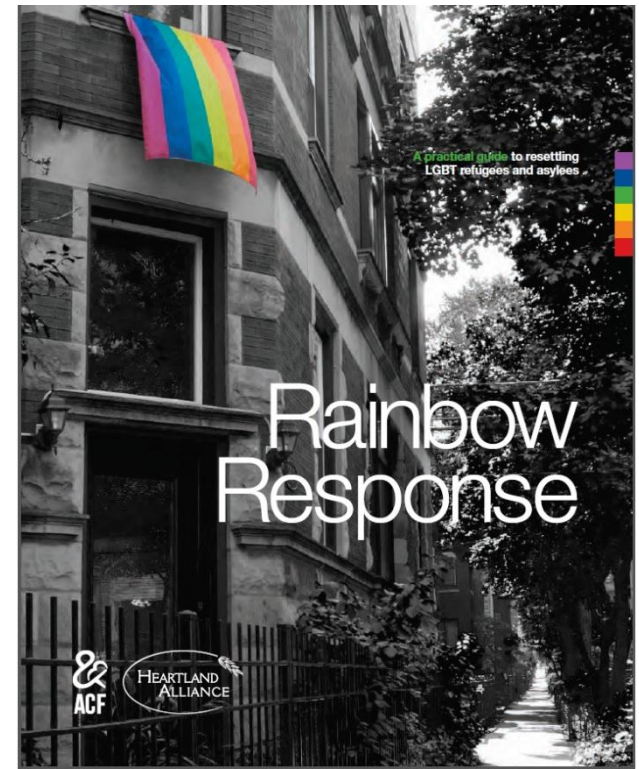


# Finding Community

- Secondary migration
  - LGBT refugees often move from less to more supportive communities
  - Does not fit pattern of secondary migration to ethnic/national communities
  - Importance of “critical mass” of LGBT refugees and services
- Getting it right the first time
  - Big differences in legal and social environment
  - Increased VOLAG attention to case allocation
  - Efforts to resettle partners together

# Rainbow Welcome Initiative

- Trainings and webinars
  - Refugee Resettlement agencies
  - UAC care providers
  - Torture treatment programs
- Resource materials
  - Needs assessment
  - “Rainbow Response” Field manual
  - [www.rainbowwelcome.org](http://www.rainbowwelcome.org)



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