



# ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF LGBTI PEOPLE



## OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world.

## INTRODUCTION

Go back in time before we were fighting for marriage equality...further back: before the Stonewall riots spawned the American movement for gay rights. Picture life in our country when police routinely raided gay bars and people had to meet and socialize in secret to avoid arrest.

Where our grantees work, that time is now. In many developing countries, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people live in constant fear. They're denied jobs, education and health care. They're ostracized, threatened and assaulted—just for living their lives. In 78 countries around the world, homosexuality is illegal—punishable by imprisonment and, in some cases, by death.

## PROMOTING LGBTI RIGHTS WORLDWIDE

American Jewish World Service is committed to building movements to fight this injustice. We are the fourth largest funder of international LGBTI work, according to a 2013 report by Funders for LGBTQ Issues. We have granted nearly \$6 million to support LGBTI work, and currently fund 51 organizations promoting the rights of LGBTI people in 14 countries and in regional movements for change.

With this support, our grantees are coming out, speaking out, collaborating and pursuing recognition, inclusion, security and equality. We also mobilize supporters in the U.S. to advocate for laws and policies that advance the rights of LGBTI people in the developing world.

## AJWS GRANTEES CHANGING THE WORLD

- In Kenya: **Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved (PEMA)**. PEMA was founded after the death of a local gay man who was shunned by his family in Kenya's religiously conservative coast. The organization works to reverse discriminatory attitudes that lead to violence against LGBTI people by engaging in dialogue with the public, the police, local chiefs and village elders.
- In Nicaragua: **Grupo Safo**. Grupo Safo, a women's advocacy organization, opened the first health clinic in Nicaragua specifically for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, which provides them with comprehensive care and ensures that they are treated with respect.
- In India: **SANGRAM**. In the small west-coast town of Sangli, where LGBTI people face prejudice and harassment and high rates of HIV, SANGRAM is the first organization that provided resources to the LGBTI population. It offers education, advocacy support and a safe space for LGBTI people to come together to organize and defend their rights.

## FIGHTING THE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL IN UGANDA

Since 2009, AJWS and its Ugandan partners have worked to fight a draconian anti-LGBTI bill introduced in Uganda's parliament. The bill inflamed homophobic sentiment in the country, but also served as a rallying point for the international LGBTI movement. In February 2014—despite international opposition from AJWS, our grantees and many other human rights groups—Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed the bill into law. The law demanded prison time for anyone who engages in same-sex sexual activity or provides support to the LGBTI community.

But AJWS's grantees refused to accept this loss. With the support of the global human rights community, including a strong U.S. diplomatic response, they challenged the law's constitutionality in court and won. AJWS and the Ugandan activist community have celebrated this legal victory but remain vigilant, as lawmakers may reintroduce the bill in the future.



An AJWS grantee in Uganda shields his face with a local tabloid article, which incited public hatred and revealed the names and faces of LGBTI advocates. Some of them fear violence from homophobic extremists. **PHOTO** Evan Abramson

**American Jewish World Service (AJWS)** is the leading Jewish organization working to promote human rights and end poverty in the developing world. AJWS promotes civil and political rights; advances sexual health and rights; defends access to food, land and water; and aids communities in the aftermath of disasters. We pursue lasting change by supporting grassroots and global human rights organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and by advocating for U.S. and international policies for justice and equality worldwide.

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