

INNOVATORS 4 CLIMATE
ACTION



Building Adaptation and Resilience

2024

A satellite-style map of Kenya, showing green landmasses, brown and grey terrain, and blue water bodies, curved along the right edge of the page.

THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON LBQ INDIVIDUALS IN KENYA

BY INNOVATORS 4 CLIMATE ACTION

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GLOSSARY

The term LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer) is generally recognized in international human rights law. This research acknowledges the term's inherent exclusivity, as well as its cultural implications for sexual minorities in non-Western countries, who may not necessarily be represented within this fixed identity. Throughout this report, we employ the term 'queer' interchangeably with LGBTIQ as an umbrella term.

BISEXUAL:

A person who experiences emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to, or engages in emotional, romantic, or sexual relationships with, more than one sex or gender.

CIS/CISGENDER:

Denoting or relating to a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth; not transgender..

GAY:

A homosexual man.

GBV:

Gender Based Violence

GENDER EXPRESSION:

Ways of showing gender to others, such as through mannerisms, clothes, and personal interests.

GENDER IDENTITY:

Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth, or the gender attributed to them by society.

GENDER:

A social and cultural expression of sex; not the biological sex people are born with.

HETEROSEXUAL:

A person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of a different gender.

HOMOSEXUAL:

A person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of the same gender.

INTERSEX:

A general term used for a variety of situations in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the boxes of 'female' or 'male.' These differences can manifest in different ways across a range of indications, such as gonads, genitalia, or chromosome patterns.

LBQ:

Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer people, both cis-gender and trans, as well as non-binary people on the gender spectrum.

LESBIAN:

A woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to, or engages in emotional, romantic, or sexual relationships with women.

LGBTIQ+:

Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer. The additional '+' stands for all of the other identities not encompassed in the short acronym, and exists to intentionally include and raise awareness of the myriad of other communities, such as the Asexual, Genderfluid, and Non-Binary communities. LGBTIQ+ is an umbrella term often used to refer to the community as a whole. LBQ in this report refers to Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer individuals.

NON-BINARY:

An adjective describing people whose gender identity falls outside the male-female binary.

QUEER:

Denoting or relating to a sexual or gender identity that does not correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender, especially heterosexual norms. It may be used as an umbrella term for people with diverse SOGIESC, or as an alternative to the phrase 'people with diverse SOGIESC,' or the acronym LGBT.

SEX:

The classification of a person as having female, male and/or intersex sex characteristics.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION:

An enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions. A person's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity. Sex is usually determined by biological factors such as a person's reproductive organs, genes, and hormones. Sex, like gender, is not a binary concept.

SGM:

Sexual and Gender Minorities.

SOGIESC:

An acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

SRHR:

Stands for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights. This refers to a person's right to a healthy body; the autonomy, education, and healthcare to freely decide who to have sex with; and the knowledge and healthcare products to avoid sexually transmitted infections or unintended pregnancy. Sexual health is an integral part of overall health and

well-being, ensuring people can have pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, or health risks.

TRANSGENDER:

Of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity differs from the sex the person was identified as having at birth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate justice and Lesbian Bisexual and Queer (LBQ) justice are both some of the most important yet under-researched issues of our time in the Global Majority Countries, most especially in Kenya. This groundbreaking report is an essential piece of work for Innovators 4 Climate Action (ICA) precisely because it spotlights the intersection of climate justice and LBQ justice.

As ICA, we believe in the need for involvement of climate-risk communities: the most economically, politically, and socially marginalised, which is overwhelmingly gender minorities, and particularly Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer individuals, in climate adaptation and mitigation actions. Our mission is to innovate and promote just and sustainable climate action solutions in Kenya that centre the interests of Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGM), particularly Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer individuals; not just combating environmental degradation, but also dismantling the systemic inequalities that exacerbate the vulnerability of LBQ individuals in Kenya. This community, rich in diversity and resilience, finds itself on the frontlines of a climate crisis that is linked to their lived experiences of marginalisation and discrimination.

The importance of this research cannot be overstated. It is not merely an academic exercise; it is a lifeline. It sheds light on the specific ways in which climate change impacts LBQ individuals, revealing the nuanced interplay of gender, sexual orientation, and climate injustice. This knowledge is vital because it equips us with the evidence needed to advocate for inclusive policies, to then design interventions that address the unique needs of LBQ individuals, and further create support systems that not only provide relief, but also allow LBQ individuals to be at the forefront of the climate justice movement. This research is important because without it, the narratives of LBQ individuals remain unheard, their challenges invisible to those in power.

Winyi Ouma

Executive Director

Innovators 4 Climate Action

“

The research is a tool for visibility, a declaration that LBQ individuals are here, they are impacted, and they are indispensable to the fight against climate change.

It is a call to action that resonates with the core of Black feminist thought—recognizing that our liberation is bound together, and that the fight for climate justice must be intersectional to be truly transformative.

”

FOREWORD

Dear Stakeholders, Fellow LBQ Residents of Kenya, Partners, and Allies,

Innovators 4 Climate Action is pleased to present this vital research documentation on the impact of climate change on LBQ (Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer) individuals in the Republic of Kenya.

The study underscores the need to include LBQ individuals in climate change discussions and policies, highlighting our exclusion due to heteronormative and cisnormative practices, as well as the lack of empirical evidence and interest among climate change Stakeholders.

Through landmark rigorous research and analysis, our ICA team has spotlighted the impact of climate change at the intersections of diverse Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation.

LBQ individuals' double marginalised position puts us at higher risk during climate change disasters, further exacerbated by the lack of consideration for our needs in climate change mitigation policies and practices.

Despite being double marginalised, LBQ residents of Kenya possess capacities that can reduce the impact of climate change for themselves, and the wider community.

We commend our research team for their dedication to this critical topic, and for their efforts to amplify the voices of LBQ individuals in Kenya. It is our hope that this research will serve as a foundation for further studies and actions aimed at advancing the rights and well-being of LBQ individuals, not only in Kenya, but globally.

In Justice & Solidarity,

Okwara Masafu Adv. (She/Her)

Human Rights Lawyer

National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission

ICA Board Member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Innovators 4 Climate Action (ICA) is a non-profit LBQ-led Climate Justice Foundation established in March 2023 and registered in July 2023 under the Companies Act, 2015. ICA was established in response to the global climate crisis and its impacts in Kenya. There was a clear need for involvement of frontline communities, especially Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer (LBQ) individuals in climate action, in order to enhance the effectiveness of climate responses, promote social equity and resilience, and community ownership in tackling the global climate crisis.

ICA uses intersectional feminist approaches to effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. We believe that the perspectives and experiences of LBQ individuals who are disproportionately impacted by climate change must be actively included and integrated into climate action interventions. This means recognizing and addressing the various forms of oppression and inequality that intersect with climate change, and working towards solutions that are equitable and just for all.

This report was researched and written by Nancy Houston (she/her) as the lead independent consultant researcher commissioned by ICA. Nancy is a human rights lawyer, and the co-founder of Feminists in Kenya, a social movement of feminist and queer activists committed to amplifying feminist discourse, with the long-term vision of providing feminist solutions to foster a just world for all. A Chevening Scholar, she holds an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the University of Essex, and sits on the Global Advisory Council of FRIDA (Young Feminist Fund). Her research interests include Feminist movements, Queer movements, Feminist Technology and Climate Justice.

Catherine Amayi (she/her), the Research Assistant, co-authored various sections and provided editorial guidance. Catherine is a feminist researcher with a decade of knowledge and work experience on the intersections of climate justice, sexual and reproductive health, digital rights, and transformative justice. She is currently writing a book on mining economies and food sovereignty. Catherine has a Masters degree in Environmental Studies and Community Development from Kenyatta University, Nairobi.

This report was also copy edited and proofread by Abigail Arunga, and designed by Diana Odero.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all individuals who participated in the focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and surveys. Your participation played a crucial role in shaping our understanding of this topic, and we are truly thankful for your time, insights, and experiences shared during the research process.

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INTRODUCTION

As the global community assembled in the United Arab Emirates for the annual Conference of Parties (COP28) at Expo City Dubai, the urgency of the climate crisis as a global emergency became increasingly evident. A central focus of the agenda was the ambitious aim of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°Celsius, aligning with the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement. To achieve this necessitates a complete phase-out of fossil fuel consumption, and the initiation of a just and equitable transition toward renewable energy sources.

However, the complex dynamics between developed and developing nations complicates this endeavour. Developing countries, despite being the least contributors of emissions, bear the brunt of the climate crisis, while wealthier nations remain the primary culprits behind fossil fuel emissions. This imbalance is especially critical now, as developing nations grapple with extreme temperatures, floods, droughts, loss of biodiversity, heavy rains, soil erosion, and rising sea levels, all of which significantly impact the economic fabric of their societies. As the world convenes to address these challenges, it becomes imperative to navigate and rectify historical and ongoing inequalities to foster a truly collective and effective response to the climate emergency.

Research indicates that developing nations are disproportionately impacted by climate change, primarily due to their geographical proximity to the equator, resulting in heightened temperatures. As climate change intensifies, these countries experience persistent elevated temperatures, leading to significant challenges, particularly in terms of water security and food production.

In the case of Kenya and its positionality as a developing nation, Kenya is exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The World Bank estimates that the current climate crisis, marked by events like droughts and floods, is likely to reverse the substantial progress Kenya has achieved in recent years. This vulnerability is evident in El Niño rains, which frequently cause severe consequences that extend to critical sectors of Kenya's economy, including agriculture and livestock.

Despite this, Kenya has positioned itself as a leader in climate discourse, steering the conversation. However, false climate solutions are being implemented at the expense of proven solutions. Some of the actions to the environment have been outrightly atrocious, like allowing the licensing of European multinationals which uproot baobab trees at the Kenyan coast, to lifting the logging ban at a time when national tree cover is at its lowest, to marketing Kenya as a carbon market destination.

Recently, the Kenyan government set aside a national tree planting holiday seeking to plant 15 billion trees by 2032 to combat climate change. The move was rushed, without any planning, species knowledge, ecosystem-specific needs, or even strategy on how the seedlings will be cared for to maturity. Another significant moment was the Africa Climate Summit that attracted key global players to Nairobi in September 2023.

Within the ongoing climate conversation, the most vulnerable groups who are historically marginalised based on factors such as race, sex, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, disability, and religion find themselves pushed even more to the margins. There is a widespread acknowledgment that the impacts of the climate crisis disproportionately affect these marginalised communities. Furthermore, there is limited or no attempt to consult and take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable in the course of developing climate mitigation measures. Against this backdrop, this research addresses the profound omission of sexual and gender minorities (SGM) in the climate discourse, a situation further aggravated by the criminalisation of adult consensual same-sex conduct.

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To that end, this study raises a crucial question: where do we position LBQ Kenyans in the climate discourse?

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In order to answer this question, it is pertinent to understand the status of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) rights in Kenya.

1.1 A Contextual Analysis of SOGI Rights in Kenya

The status of SOGI rights in Kenya may be best informed by the country's immediate presidents. In his capacity as Deputy President in 2015, incumbent President Dr William Ruto, stated that "The Republic of Kenya is a republic that worships God. There is no room for homosexuality in Kenya." In 2018, former President Uhuru Kenyatta stated that as a matter of cultural values, SOGI rights were "of no importance to the people of Kenya."

According to a 2011 report by the Kenya Human Rights Commission, in which 474 LGBTIQ+ Kenyans were interviewed in order to gather findings on the realities of homophobic violence in Kenya, it is evident that these remarks form part of the general perception of SGM in Kenya.

Additionally, the report also revealed that these perceptions of sexual minorities propagate stigma, discrimination, and gross violence against LGBTIQ+ Kenyans, which are further aggravated by the harsh penal legislations criminalising same-sex conduct, deemed "against the order of nature." The effects of these hateful legislations and existing norms are felt in the everyday lives of LGBTIQ+ Kenyans.

More recently, following the rape and murder of Sheila Lumumba, a 25-year-old non-binary lesbian, LGBTIQ+ Kenyans organized a hashtag movement dubbed #JusticeforSheila. Additionally, the 2021 murders of LGBTIQ+ activist Joash Mosoti and trans-woman Erica Chandra sparked similar online movements dubbed #JusticeForJoash and #JusticeForErica. In the digital age, LGBTIQ+ Kenyan activists have mostly built movements on the internet against homophobic violence, which rally for public engagement, accountability, and justice.

In response to widespread violence against LGBTIQ+ Kenyans, GALCK+ (formerly the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) advancing SOGI rights in Kenya, reported that 53% of LGBTIQ+ Kenyans are victims of phys-

ical assault, with only 29% reporting these assaults to the police. Fear of retaliation and re-victimisation by the police contributed to the low reporting rate.

In Kenya, the criminalisation of same-sex conduct is explicitly outlined in Section 162(a) and (c), and Section 165 of the Kenyan Penal Code. These are widely touted as ‘colonial relic’ pieces of legislation, considering similar sections were recalled following decriminalisation of adult consensual same-sex conduct in Britain, but they are still unfortunately upheld in Kenya. This legal stance is deeply rooted in a heteronormative framework that permeates not only the country’s legislative statutes, but also finds expression in the Kenyan Constitution and legal jurisprudence. The legal landscape in Kenya is inherently shaped by heteronormative principles, including heteronormative views on what constitutes a family, reinforcing the stigma of same-sex relationships and contributing to a systemic environment of discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community.

In the fight to decriminalise adult consensual same-sex relationships and repeal 162, LGBTIQ+ Kenyans approached the court via the case of EG & 7 others v Attorney General; DKM & 9 others (Interested Parties); Katiba Institute & another (Amicus Curiae). This moment was widely anticipated by queer Kenyans. The case would determine whether Sections 162(a) and (c) and 165 of the Kenyan Penal Code would be upheld, or deemed unconstitutional by the High Court. It would also signify new beginnings for LGBTIQ+ Kenyans in terms of accessing their rights to equality, human dignity, security, health, and privacy.

However, on May 24, 2019, a three-judge bench unanimously upheld sections 162(a) and (c) and 165, concluding that they were not unconstitutional.

The High Court’s decision to decline to declare the discriminatory laws unconstitutional inflamed the continued justification of grave human rights violations occurring on account of diverse Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. In that period, The National Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) recorded a 200% increase in the cases of human rights violations against LGBTIQ+ Kenyans, refugees, and asylum seekers at the NGLHRC Public Legal Aid Clinic for Sexual and Gender Minority

Kenyans.

The Kenyan Constitution guarantees equality and non-discrimination for all. The Supreme Court of Kenya on February 24, 2023 ruled to allow for the Freedom of Association for NGLHRC. (Eric Gitari vs. NGO Coordination Board). The judgement expanded the classes of protection from discrimination in Article 27 to include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

With the above as a starting point, this research contends that the criminalisation of adult consensual same-sex relationships in Kenya and existing social norms is a fundamental driver of the stigma experienced by LGBTIQ+ Kenyans in climate change discourse. The situation has escalated with the introduction of a proposed anti-homosexuality bill, dubbed the 'Family Protection Bill 2023.' This bill aims to eliminate same-sex unions and LGBTIQ+ based advocacy and campaigns, proposing severe penalties of a minimum of 10 years to a maximum of 50 years in prison for those involved in non-consensual same-sex acts. Consequently, there has been a surge in homophobia and scrutiny towards LGBTIQ+ Kenyans. The introduction of this bill has sparked anti-LGBTIQ+ hate protests in major cities like Mombasa and Nairobi, led by religious leaders, politicians, and civil society organisations.

Consequently, the parliament of Kenya is discussing the Constitutional Amendment Bill 2023, dubbed 'Linda Jamii,' that seeks to draw back on all legal gains that have been fought for so far to protect LGBTIQ+ Kenyans and refugees. Among other things, the Constitutional Amendment Bill proposes to amend Kenya's ratified international laws that offer protections to LGBTIQ+ Kenyans. Further, the Bill seeks to clamp down on the freedom of association, and prohibit marriage equality and abortion.

Thus, locating LGBTIQ+ Kenyans in the climate discourse proves challenging, as they are more likely to be susceptible to being overlooked due to the systemic exclusion, criminalisation and the pervasive discrimination and stigma they confront daily. One respondent expressed that...

“

I want to talk about climate change, but why would consideration be extended to us during climate emergencies when we are not even recognized by the law?

”

This sentiment highlights the general feeling during focus group discussions, and underscores their marginalised status within climate discussions.

1.2 What is climate change, why climate change, why is the world investing in it?

1.2.1 Climate Change

The onset of the Industrial Revolution, marked by colonisation and manufacturing expansion in Europe and the Americas, signalled the emergence of a phenomenon now recognized as climate change.

Climate Change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, often from the burning of fossil fuels, which produces greenhouse gas emissions. In Kenya, climate change has been observed since the 1960s, with the country witnessing flooding, drought, as well as the increase of other forms of natural disasters like locust invasions, mudslides, and landslides among others.

1.2.2 Why Climate Change & Why the World is Investing in it?

While there has been significant public awareness and political action on climate change, much of these efforts have fallen short in addressing the underlying root cause - capitalist expansion and imperial domination. Only recently did the United Nations finally acknowledge that climate change and the resulting consequences were produced by colonialism.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was instituted in the aftermath of the 1992 Rio Summit, serving as the framework through which global decisions on climate are deliberated and made. Since its establishment, the UNFCCC has convened annual Conference of Parties (COPs) summits to address pressing global climate concerns, concerns which have been proportionately growing over time.

During the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) in Copenhagen, rich polluter states from the Global North pledged USD 100 billion annually for 10 years, to end in 2020. These funds were intended for Global South countries to assist in addressing and mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change on frontline communities and ecosystems.

However, these promised funds remain a mirage, even as the climate continues to worsen, inflicting multidimensional hardships on many communities in the Global South.

COP21 in Paris, France, was ushered in against this backdrop. Following rigorous deliberations, the Paris Agreement emerged from this summit. The deal aimed to limit global warming to its pre-industrial revolution quantities of 2°C and below, a vision that remains unfulfilled.

Paris served as the model for the future of these negotiations, with subsequent COP summits adopting the deal as the moral compass for climate discourse and action - often with little success. Once again, countries in the Global North have failed in reducing emissions or fulfilling their financial commitments, including the USD 100 billion pledged in 2009.

At the 2021 Glasgow Summit, the rallying calls to reduce emissions to below 2°C and uphold the USD 100 billion pledge resonated consistently from one speaker to the next. Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados, for instance, delivered a powerful speech, challenging global leaders to genuinely prioritize climate action by committing to emissions reductions and honouring their financial obligations.

At Sharm el-Sheikh in 2022, members and civil society representatives attempted to refocus attention on the Paris Deal, and the loss and damage fund, among other crucial matters. However, there appeared to be a prevailing atmosphere of reluctance, particularly regarding commitments to climate mitigation funds and responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including addressing vaccine inequities.

The remarks by the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry further distancing his country from any commitments to the loss and damage fund at COP27 in Egypt came as no surprise to many experts and activists from the Global South. They had observed this trend for years, and consistently emphasized the need for intersectionality in the climate discourse. An intersectional analysis argues that climate change does not affect everyone equally. Social, geographical, political, economic, colonial, and other forms of structural marginalisation determine who is impacted the most. This disproportionality in the impact of climate change has been repeatedly and scientifically proven.

This year, the COP28 Presidency launched the Gender-Responsive Just Transitions & Climate Action Partnership that builds on objectives previously outlined in the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan. In particular, the new partnership is centred around three core pillars: more effective finance flows to the most climate-vulnerable; better data quality to support decision-making in transition planning; and education, skills, and capacity building for individuals.

Additionally, in an early win at COP28 in Dubai, global leaders formally adopted a loss and damage fund, with multiple countries pledging over \$700m (£556m) to compensate vulnerable countries coping with loss and damage caused by climate change.

Although these COP summits have always made space for civil society organisations (CSOs) since their inception, there have been concerns over the neoliberal framework undergirding the construction and motivations of CSOs, which fortifies barriers between them and the people they claim to represent. It is why the voices, experiences, histories, and aspirations of the most marginalised communities are consistently under-acted upon, from women, to indigenous people, to island communities, to persons with disabilities, to the economically disenfranchised, and most especially for this research, queer people and queer women, and their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

Over the years, concerns have been raised, not just about the invisibility of the most marginalised groups or context-specific analysis in the climate discourse, but also about how some of the proposed solutions from these summits further advance their marginalisation. For instance, the recent COP27 and COP28 summits have intensified the lobbying for the expansion of carbon offset projects, often in the Global South, where polluters swoop in to dispossess land from indigenous communities, instead of cutting down emissions. This has been the case in Tanzania, Liberia, the DRC, and other countries across Africa. These same pro-carbon market actors came out conspicuously in the Nairobi Climate Summit, where Kenya's President William Ruto, who mobilized parliament to pass a carbon market law right before the summit, disregarded the voices of the civil society from across Africa by campaigning for and selling the carbon market agenda, calling it a "win-win between polluters and victims of climate change."

Different African scholars, climate organisations, and movements such as Akina Mama wa Africa and The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), among others, have condemned carbon markets as false solutions. Speaking on behalf of FEMNET in the aftermath of the African Climate Summit, Memory Kachambwa stated: "From our perspective, carbon credits are a false solution, because the polluter will continue polluting while we plant trees." In addition to land grabbing, these false solutions divert attention from concrete, proven, and often indigenous solutions, and continue to marginalise vulnerable people, pushing them even further from climate justice.

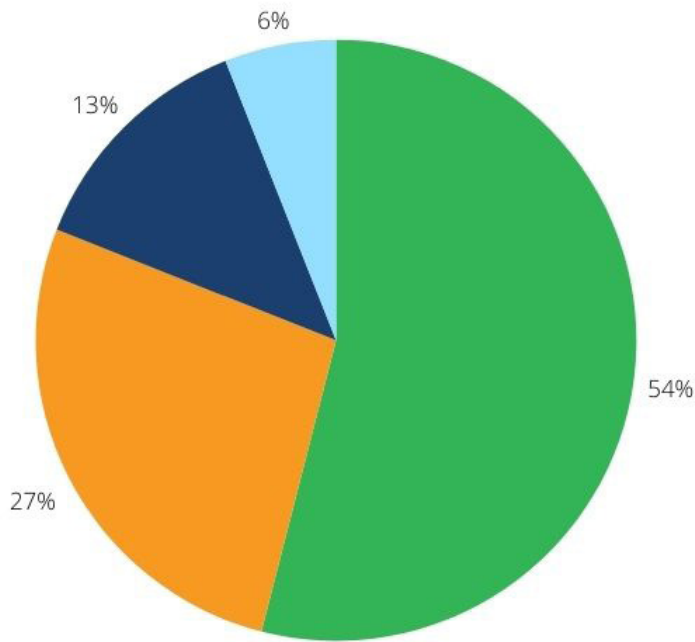
METHODOLOGY

Our goal was to understand and address the specific impacts of climate change on LBQ individuals in Kenya, with the aim of informing targeted interventions, policies, and programs that promote their well-being, resilience, and inclusion in climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The research engaged a total of 65 participants, comprising 50 individuals in Focus Group Discussions, and 15 Key Informant Interviewees. The research demographic consisted of participants aged 18-50, with 53% identifying their gender identity as non-binary, and 47% identifying their sexual orientation as queer.

We conducted a comprehensive analysis of both the collected data and existing literature on climate change, drawing insights from academic sources, international organisations, grassroots organisations, press releases and opinion pieces by climate activists. Additionally, we assessed the impacts of climate change on LBQ women in Kenya through surveys, structured into four sections: demographic data, respondents' awareness of climate change, the specific impacts of climate change, and the level of advocacy support.

Gender Identity



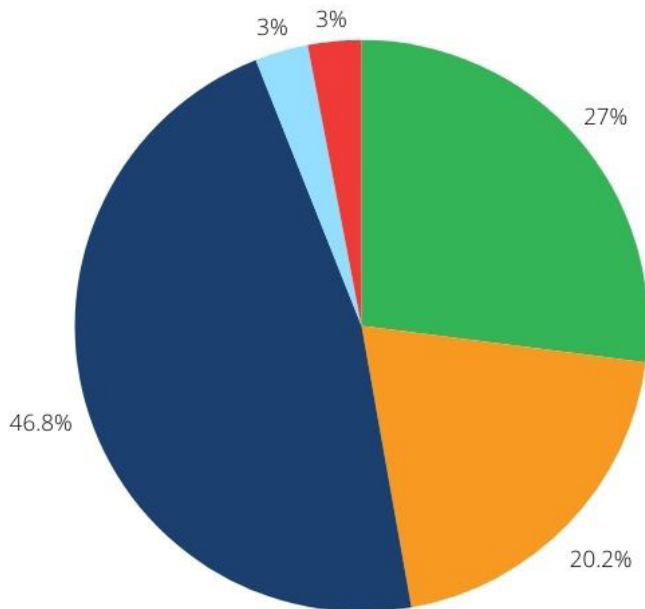
NON BINARY
54%

CISGENDER
27%

TRANSGENDER
13%

DON'T WISH TO SAY
6%

Sexual Orientation



LESBIAN
27%

BISEXUAL
20%

QUEER
47%

HETEROSEXUAL
3%

DON'T WISH TO SAY
3%

All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the sessions conducted in English. We acknowledge the language limitation as a barrier to reaching a wider audience. Our reach extended to diverse geographical locations, including Mombasa, Kilifi, Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kwale, Kiambu, and Uasin-Gishu counties. Respondents were identified from our LGBTIQ+ networks in Kenya, residing in both rural and urban areas, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives from various locations.

2.0 THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON LESBIAN, BISEXUAL & QUEER INDIVIDUALS

2.1 The Unjust Blame of Queer Kenyans in Climate Disasters

In Kenya, deeply entrenched religious beliefs have created a hostile environment for queer Kenyans, who often find themselves unjustly blamed for climate-related disasters. Respondents revealed that they are viewed as deviants, and have faced numerous dehumanizing comments from religious individuals who link climate disasters like floods and droughts to the supposed “evil practices” of the LGBTIQ+ community. One respondent stated that “it is said that we have cursed the land.”

According to these beliefs, climate disasters are perceived as divine punishment, further fuelling the scapegoating of queer individuals. This occurrence is not unprecedented, as history has shown instances where the LGBTIQ+ community were unjustly blamed for major disasters. There was, for example, the baseless blame placed on the community for events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Such scapegoating also tends to serve as a diversionary tactic employed by political leaders, deflecting attention from their own shortcomings and failures in adequately preparing for and responding to crises, be they related to climate, or even other sectors public health and finance. Therefore, blaming the queer community becomes a misguided sideshow, allowing leaders to avoid accountability and scrutiny for their lack of effective leadership in times of extreme disasters.

Additionally, Kenya’s economic landscape has undergone a transformation from histor-

ically relying on agriculture, to now relying on tourism. This shift has been spurred by climate change, which has significantly reduced food production. The impact has been profound, with many abandoning agriculture as a viable source of income. The reliance on tourism as an economic backbone has left coastal areas vulnerable to detrimental human activities on the environment and climate-induced disruptions, affecting not only the economic stability of the region, but also amplifying social tensions.

The impact of climate change on the tourism sector in Kenya has led to multiple challenges, particularly affecting coastal areas where queer Kenyans have either migrated to or established long-term residency. The Kenyan coastal areas, renowned for powering tourism, now experience continuous rainfall and extreme flooding, attributed to El Niño, and intensified by climate change. This unrelenting rain has heightened desperation and anxiety among residents, especially those reliant on tourism-related work. Individuals who would typically be actively engaged in tourism-related activities now find themselves financially at risk.

Amid these challenges, respondents from Mombasa and Kwale reported that blame for the downturn in tourism is unjustly placed on queer individuals. In the coastal towns, resentment towards “outsiders,” individuals not born in the coast, has increased. This resentment is made worse by economic hardship, creating an environment where hostility and aggression towards those perceived as newcomers has become more prevalent. As queer individuals who migrated in the coast to escape the scrutiny in Nairobi associated with proposed anti-homosexuality laws, the growing animosity instills a new sense of fear, and threatens their security and well-being.

2.2 The Economic Impacts of Climate Change on Queer Kenyans

2.2.1 Employment Discrimination

LBQ individuals face significant economic disparities due to formal employment discrimination. This is a systemic issue that often excludes them solely based on their sexual orientation. This has resulted in a significant portion of the community seeking work in the informal sector in Kenya, where the lack of legal protection and job security further impacts their economic incapacitation. The informal sector is also highly susceptible to

the impacts of climate change, particularly in the context of the agricultural industry. Respondents living in rural agricultural areas highlighted a range of climate-related disruptions in the agricultural sector, including droughts, floods, erratic weather patterns, and the consequential loss of animals and livestock. These adversities increase the already pre-existing economic vulnerability of queer people, who already disproportionately grapple with poverty due to pervasive unemployment.

2.2.2 Climate Disasters and Economic Insecurity

Additionally, extreme weather patterns are disruptive and damaging to infrastructure such as roads, water lines, sewage infrastructure, bridges, houses, and electricity infrastructure. Extreme floods also lead to water pollution, flooding of farms and destruction of food crops and animals, which interferes with businesses that directly depend on agriculture, fishing, forestry, and energy production. In Kenya, the tourism economy was greatly affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic, leading to the loss of jobs and businesses for many people whose economic sustenance is tourism and agriculture across the country - and some were LBQ Kenyans. Around the same time, deadly droughts swept the country, leaving newly retrenched Kenyans without alternative sources of livelihood in agriculture. Furthermore, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the flooding of Lake Victoria saw massive losses in homes, crops, farm animals, fishing, and other sources of livelihood, thus economically impacting surrounding communities. In 2023, El Niño floods ravaged the homes of inhabitants on the Kenyan coast, in places such as Mombasa, Tana River, Kwale, Lamu, and Kilifi, destroying crucial infrastructure like bridges, roads, homes, and other businesses that support the livelihood of the communities. In Kwale, for example, at least 681 households were affected, and over 1000 acres of farms were destroyed. These consequences leave LBQ communities in these regions without jobs, and without safety nets, as they are not cushioned by the law. Additionally, the government is less likely to consider the unique challenges that LBQ individuals encounter in these situations, such as limited access to healthcare, heightened violence, and increased homophobia.

Multiple droughts and urban sprawl in recent years have destroyed the agricultural economies of Nairobi and surrounding counties, thus creating a multiplier effect on other sectors of the city's economy. For instance, approximately 300,000 cattle died in

Kajiado country in 2022 alone, in one of the worst droughts of Kenya's history. The haphazard planning of Nairobi-adjacent regions has resulted in the appropriation of agriculturally productive land into real estate. This not only affects the climate by contributing to the creation of urban heat islands, but also harms agricultural businesses. Additionally, it aggravates the breadth of climate disasters due to the absence of essential infrastructure such as sanitation, energy, and green spaces.

These climate disasters are compounded by the fact that Kenya sets aside meagre resources to cushion communities from loss, and almost no resources are incorporated into the fiscal planning to cushion LBQ persons who are already criminalised by law. These intersecting vulnerabilities have material impact on LBQ persons. One participant observed that..

“

Food has been scarce because the varying crop yields in expected seasons has made food expensive. [We] experience recurring floods, as I live near the Nairobi Dam.

”

This economic insecurity may lead LBQ individuals to seek alternative, potentially costly, sources of socioeconomic sustenance, such as sex work. Although our feminist analysis recognizes the significance and dignity of sex work, it still remains criminalised in Kenya. According to the Kenya Human Rights Commission, this situation frequently exposes LBQ individuals to the risk of imprisonment, extortion, rape, trafficking, and homophobic stigma. Moreover, extreme climate conditions may force queer communities to migrate in an effort to shield themselves from climate related emergencies such as flooding, polluted water and land, unstable temperatures, rising sea levels, landslides, and other forms of ecosystem collapse. This, in turn, leads them to become

climate refugees, as observed in various geographical areas. Such circumstances often drastically disrupt the already fragile ties that may exist between LBQ individuals and their communities.

Reflecting on these intersecting struggles, one participant observed that:

“

Owing to many factors, Queer folk struggle to access employment, which is mainly a product of systemic setups.

The effects of climate change have made the chances of access to employment for queer persons even slimmer, as (there are) already high rates of unemployment amongst youth due to climate change. Also, the more the economical strain now in Kenya, the higher the rates of homophobia and discrimination killings as witnessed in the last three years in the country.

”

2.2.3 On Austerity Measures

Climate-induced economic anxiety and job losses for LBQ individuals also stems from significant climate mitigation loans provided to the government by Western institutions like the World Bank, or the International Monetary Fund. Often, these loans come with conditionalities to cut public spending on education, green spaces, healthcare, pension schemes, culture, and arts. LBQ individuals and other vulnerable people who work in these sectors are often among the first to lose employment. Austerity measures, including high taxation, leave the working class with minimal savings and long-term economic insecurity. Moreover, consequences of these loans, such as currency devaluation, contribute to systemic wage theft as earnings from various trades decline. Cuts in public spending also directly impede economically marginalised groups, including LBQ individuals, from accessing credit and higher education opportunities, making it challenging to acquire alternative skills and knowledge, further exacerbating systemic marginalisation.

2.3 Climate Change and Food Security

The criminalisation of same-sex relationships in Kenya imposes numerous societal barriers on queer individuals, impacting various facets of their lives, including employment, health, education, and housing. This systematic discrimination renders them economically disempowered, significantly affecting their material conditions and overall livelihoods. Concurrently, climate-related disasters, such as rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, sea-level rise, soil erosion, heavy rains, floods, and droughts, continue to pose a severe threat to the Kenyan agricultural sector, placing the most marginalised groups at unprecedented risk. The continuing climate crisis is expected to increase hunger, making sustainable food cultivation increasingly challenging. The pressure on agricultural land, intensified by climate change, will further impede food production. Given their existing vulnerability, LBQ individuals are particularly prone to experiencing food insecurity and hunger.

Moreover, since queer Kenyans predominantly work in the informal agricultural sectors, they also grapple with harsh working conditions, unrecognized labour, and heightened homophobia, finding themselves even more exposed to the economic impacts of the climate crisis.

Mining, pollution from fossil fuels, deforestation, dumping toxic waste, and weapons used in wars often contribute to long-term shifts such as the loss of crucial biodiversity, thus weakening land, air, and water bodies for food production. The resulting climate and ecological shifts often compromise the food chains, in addition to jeopardizing the capacity to grow certain foods and rear certain animals due to increased susceptibility to pests and other resistant bugs, such as desert locusts.

For instance, in 2019, desert locusts affected 22 Kenyan counties, destroying 9.4% of cropland and 6.3% of pastureland. The affected counties included Meru, Kajiado, Machakos, Kilifi, Lamu, Laikipia, and Tana River. This disruption in food systems led to price hikes nationwide, making it challenging for economically vulnerable individuals to afford food across the country.

While changes in climate patterns may provide conditions to divest into alternative food crops and animals, it often makes it difficult for LBQ individuals to maintain their accustomed diets, thus posing a risk to their well-being. As one research participant articulated, “The extreme weather and temperature changes directly affect my health, hence I have had to adapt to a number of coping mechanisms. The extreme dry seasons have made it difficult to get fresh vegetables and fruits which I love to purchase. Sometimes the prices are too high due to their unavailability.”

Climate challenges have also been co-opted by neo-liberal actors who use it as a pretext to introduce crude and anti-people laws. In late 2022, the government of Kenya lifted a decade-long ban on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO). This ban was supposedly lifted as a response to drought, but a section of civil society decried the move as an infringement to food sovereignty. Before the lifting of the ban, considerable groundwork had already been done, such as criminalizing the sharing of seeds, seed banks, and indigenous food systems, which have always supported indigenous African farming knowledge and kept food genes stable for generations.

According to the revised Seed and Varieties Act, Part 2(8), a person can face 6 months jail term or a fine of KSh20,000 or both if found guilty of selling uncertified seeds. Most

recently, state corporations like the Kenya Seed Company and the Kenya Cooperative Creameries have been marked for privatisation, a move that will likely harm food systems and relinquish food sovereignty to foreign multinationals. According to the African Centre for Biodiversity, such a move will hurt small-scale farmers. These multinationals often tend to criminalise indigenous afro-centric food systems such as pastoralism and cattle farming in favour of lab-produced meat, terming beef farming in Africa as dangerous to climate without proper context. Meat is a great source of nourishment and protein for most Kenyans, and an attack on centuries-long food systems infringes on the rights to food for LBQ individuals and their communities.

Since 2019 to date, the government, through the Kenya Forest Service, has licensed multinationals to uproot and export thousands of centuries-old baobab trees from Kilifi and other coastal counties, to Georgia, in Europe. This move has been termed biopiracy. The ecological ramifications of this move will likely be felt by the communities for centuries, as the baobab are not just a source of food, but also represent biodiverse life, culture, and ecological stability in the era of increased climate disasters. This biopiracy is a direct affront to the climate of Kilifi and neighbouring regions, the community's food sovereignty, and the nutritional well-being of communities, including LBQ communities who call these areas home. Likewise, changes to oceans, lakes, and rivers, including warming and pollution, compromise the food chains, in regard to factors like the quality of fish and the health of eventual consumers.

LBQ individuals are increasingly exposed to food insecurity due to intersecting forms of marginalisation that place them in lower socio-economic status in Kenya. Studies have pointed out the nexus between gender, free labour, and poverty in rural Africa, where women are more likely to perform free agricultural labour compared to men. Unpaid work and care work leads to systemic marginalisation. Reduced yields from climate extremes like prolonged droughts only detract from their material conditions, reduce agricultural yields, and worsen food insecurity.

One participant reflected on how this systemic marginalisation drove them away from farming, something they were passionate about: "I am unable to venture into part-time farming due to the unpredictable nature of the weather and seasons."

Regardless of their contributions toward food production systems, food knowledge and food distribution, LBQ individuals are more likely to be ostracised from their communities, and thus most likely to live in areas more vulnerable to climate change than the general population.

2.4 Homelessness and Poverty

In the context of climate change's impact on LGBTIQ+ individuals in Kenya, a prevalent concern among participants centred on the stigma they anticipate or routinely encounter upon their sexual orientation being disclosed to their families without their consent. The consequences of such disclosure often manifest in them being forcibly expelled from their homes, rendering them effectively homeless. Consequently, many find themselves compelled to seek refuge in shelters that can offer temporary accommodations.

Numerous studies underscore that the LGBTIQ+ community experiences a disproportionate susceptibility to homelessness compared to their heterosexual counterparts. This particularly vulnerable demographic confronts multifaceted discrimination rooted in factors such as race, migration status, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, and religion. These intersecting forms of discrimination significantly heighten the probability of LGBTIQ+ individuals facing homelessness and poverty. The consequences of homelessness extend beyond mere housing insecurity, encroaching upon various other fundamental human rights, including access to water, sanitation, security, and health. The connection with climate change becomes evident as this economically marginalised demographic is predisposed to inhabit areas most severely impacted by climate change, such as urban informal settlements.

As the frequency and severity of extreme weather events number higher and higher, causing extensive damage, queer individuals residing in urban informal settlements or grappling with being homeless emerge as the most vulnerable. Homelessness increases challenges related to sanitation, increased waterborne diseases, burgeoning levels of insecurity, and an unhealthy growth in homophobic attitudes. Moreover, the disruptive economic consequences of climate change will increase the cost of living, rendering necessities like food and energy more financially burdensome. This economic strain amplifies their vulnerability, making them prone to the adverse effects of drastic

temperature fluctuations and deteriorating air quality, thus affecting their right to live in dignity.

2.5 Mental Health

Situated as a lower-middle-income country with a diverse topography, Kenya finds itself on the brink of a climate future marked by rising temperatures and a predicted surge in the frequency, duration, and intensity of extreme rainfall events. The consequences of this evolving climate landscape, coupled with the expected climate-related disasters—ranging from prolonged droughts to flooding, mudslides, and landslides—predicts not only economic and infrastructural losses for the nation, but also a significant impact on the livelihoods of its poorest citizens. This critical situation particularly places LBQ Kenyans, an already marginalised group, at a heightened risk of experiencing climate-induced anxiety. As the nation battles with the devastation of agricultural crops due to flooding, soil erosion, and waterlogging, the repercussions extend far beyond economic and infrastructural dimensions. The agricultural sector, a cornerstone of Kenya's economy, has been substantially affected, resulting in low food production, and increasing the vulnerability of the country's most marginalised population. Queer Kenyans, already burdened with societal discrimination, are prone to experiencing these impacts, including homelessness, unemployment, economic insecurity, reduced access to essential necessities like food, shelter, energy, and financial resources, combined with increased inflation and compromised livelihoods. This will substantially affect their mental health and well-being.

Cases of mental health-related challenges including post-traumatic stress disorder, severe depression, and heightened anxiety, are likely to surge. This is particularly troubling due to the inadequate investment in mental health facilities and the prevailing stigma surrounding mental health discussions in Kenya.

Research indicates a co-relation between the climate crisis and increase in suicides. Hence, it is evident that the mental well-being of queer Kenyans stands on precarious ground, and is likely to deteriorate even further, especially without substantial policy interventions tailored to address their unique vulnerabilities in the face of climate change.

2.6 Gender-Based Violence and Climate Change

Prolific research has shown that disasters are not gender neutral. Indeed, researchers have revealed that women and other marginalised groups bear the brunt of these calamities. One example that illustrates this was during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya, where a staggering 3,964 cases of teenage pregnancies were documented in just one out of 47 counties. This unequivocally emphasizes the disproportionate impact of disasters, be they health-related, conflict-induced, or linked to climate change - with women, children, gender diverse persons and other marginalised groups shouldering a greater burden of suffering.

In the face of climate related disasters, including flooding, extreme weather conditions, extreme rainfall, drought, wildfires, rising sea levels, landslides, tornadoes and hurricanes, economic livelihoods, food security and agricultural productivity are hit the hardest. As already discussed in other parts of this research, LBQ individuals are disproportionately impacted during these disasters. Climate emergencies create social and economic challenges, placing queer women in potentially hazardous environments. As a result, LBQ individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing gendered violence, including rape, sexual harassment, and human trafficking.

One respondent shared...

“

Where I live, there's hardly any access to water. I have had to walk long distances just to get water but usually head back home without water because of violent bullying at the water points just because of my sexual orientation

”

Further, the likelihood of intimate partner violence in LBQ relationships also increases during climate disasters. However, due to the tendency to downplay, silence and overlook abuse in queer relationships and the idealized image of a perfect and utopic connection between women, which is often distinguished from the violent nature that has come to be more associated with heterosexual relationships, the presence of intimate same-sex partner violence is more likely to be dismissed.

LBQ individuals are also uniquely positioned as both women and queer and therefore face intersectional discrimination. Coined by Black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, the term intersectionality explains how people's various identities combine to shape the oppressions they experience. Essentially, the experiences of individuals, whether privileged or oppressed, are influenced by their positions on different axes of power distribution. For example, the experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals with the law are not similar to those of cisgender heterosexuals. This pattern repeats across gender, race, ethnicity, location, class, sexuality, disability, and religion. This intersectional discrimination thus leaves LBQ individuals particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence in various forms such as sexual exploitation, technology facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), intimate partner violence, harassment, and other harmful situations.

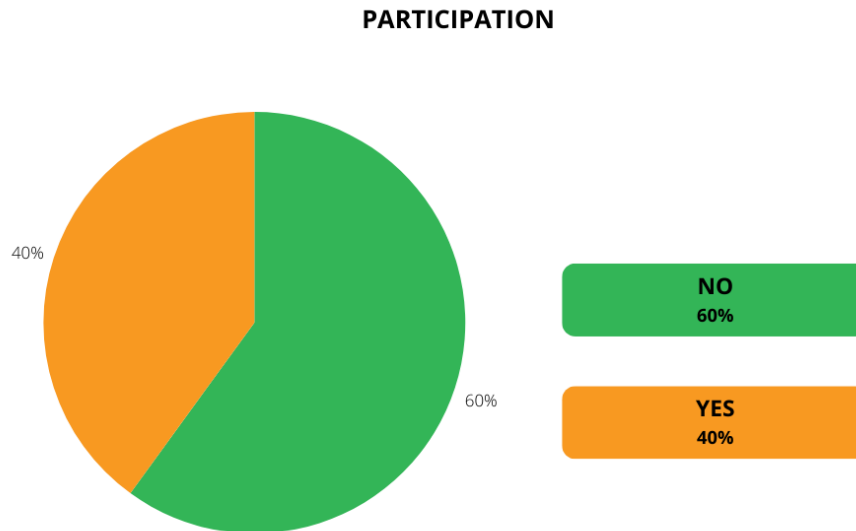
Similarly, transgender women facing climate disasters are at a higher risk of experiencing violent abuse, as they travel long distances in search of accessible and gender-affirming healthcare, psychological support services, or emergency resources. Unfortunately, these essential services are often missing or not considered in disaster responses.

Finally, climate vulnerabilities, along with the rise of anti-rights and anti-gender laws, may push LBQ individuals to migrate to areas where they perceive as low risk and safer, or even migrate across borders. However, these migrations increase the chances of them experiencing gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and trafficking.

2.7 Discrimination in Climate Justice Spaces

This research aimed to explore the extent of participation by LBQ individuals in Climate

Advocacy spaces and investigate their experiences within these spheres. The data revealed a distribution indicating that 60% of respondents had not participated in climate advocacy spaces, while 40% had participated.



The respondents who had engaged in climate change spaces overwhelmingly disclosed that their meaningful participation was hindered by pervasive discrimination, animosity, fear of exposure, and severe homophobia. They emphasized that the climate change advocacy spaces lacked inclusivity, with gender-diverse individuals being unfairly blamed for the current environmental challenges. Many recounted instances where they felt compelled to leave these spaces due to safety concerns.

One respondent highlighted the climate community's limited exposure to diverse gender identities, noting that their unique experiences as gender diverse persons had been rejected. Others echoed the sentiment: that their non-conforming gender identities clashed with prevailing societal norms, leading to their exclusion from potential collaborations with organisations funded for climate change advocacy. This exclusionary dynamic, rooted in preconceived stereotypes curtails active participation, poses a threat to the broader mission of collectively advocating for climate justice.

The following are direct sentiments expressed by the respondents:

“Criminalisation of same-sex relationships has affected my activism in that it stops me from disseminating knowledge to more people, as they will be quick to focus on my orientation and gender and not what I have to say regarding climate change awareness. It also affects my active participation in climate change awareness programs, as I’m afraid for my safety. It also has affected the pace at which I can advocate, as I must take into consideration factors that I should not, such as how I present myself and not what I have to say regarding climate change.”

“I had a nasty interaction with a man who kept on insisting we can’t talk about queer issues in a climate meeting and that the mic should be taken away from me.”

“Criminalisation has made inclusion of same-sex persons in advocacy, community sensitisations, and gender technical working groups an uphill task since community does not appreciate LBQ individuals as people with varied opinions that could greatly add value to climate change discussions in our community.”

“Queer voices are often faced with stereotypes, and one has to prove their intelligence to be included in a hetero-normative dominated world.”

The above observations make it clear that LBQ individuals in climate change advocacy spaces encounter multiple challenges, and are fundamentally being overlooked as knowers, critical thinkers, and meaningful contributors capable of providing valuable perspectives on climate change issues.

Nevertheless, it is also evident that a considerable percentage (60%) of LBQ individuals have not had the chance to participate in climate change advocacy spaces. Some respondents attribute this absence to their fear of being exposed as queer, which they believe would elevate the risk of both physical and mental attacks.

Additionally, there was a prevailing apprehension of facing animosity from religious individuals in climate change spaces, with one respondent explicitly stating, “I cannot

join unless I know I will be safe from religious fanatics.” Such reservations substantially restrict the valuable perspectives of LBQ individuals in climate change discussions, emphasizing the critical need for these spaces to remain inclusive and open.

2.8 Land Tenure and Climate Change

Land tenure rules are mechanisms through which property rights to land are assigned or managed within a given society. In the discourse surrounding climate change, land emerges as a critical asset. The ownership of land and its associated resources—encompassing trees, minerals, pastures, and water—constitutes a fundamental aspect of secure land tenure. Such tenure is not only a cornerstone for a society’s economic, social, and political growth, but also a crucial determinant of inclusivity. Insecure land tenure, on the other hand, creates a space for the exclusion of marginalised groups, including women, indigenous people, and LBQ individuals.

The recent forced eviction of the Ogiek community, an indigenous community with deep ancestral roots in the Mau Forest in Kenya, serves as a stark illustration of how government interventions can result in precarious land tenure for indigenous people, ultimately leading to violation of their human rights.

For LBQ individuals living in a society where land ownership signifies not only physical space but also access to resources, the lack of secure land tenure can increase existing vulnerabilities. Access to land and its resources allows LBQ individuals to engage in agricultural activities, start and sustain businesses, and provide them with economic security and secure housing. Without secure land tenure, LBQ individuals may face economic hardships, limiting their ability to generate income, invest in ventures, or access financial resources.

Additionally, in jurisdictions where same-sex relationships are criminalised, LBQ individuals and same-sex couples face heightened scrutiny in land related matters, since their very existence is stigmatised and criminalised. This surveillance functions to ultimately limit their rightful access to and ownership of land, while also subjecting them to problematic administrative and long legal struggles.

Respondents also reported that legal frameworks that fail to acknowledge same-sex relationships often lead to exclusion from property ownership rights, inheritance, and other critical aspects of land tenure.

LBQ couples may encounter hurdles in jointly owning property, and the absence of legal recognition can impede their ability to secure and transfer land, limiting their economic agency and stability.

Transgender individuals within the LBQ community also face distinct challenges, including documentation issues, and discrepancies between legal gender identity and gender expression, hindering their participation in land transactions. For example, a transgender person who may have legally transitioned to their affirmed gender identity may still face challenges if their official identification documents such as driver's licenses or identification cards, which reflect their gender assigned at birth, do not match their gender expression.

From the above context, it then follows that the intersection of criminalisation and insecure land tenure leaves LBQ individuals vulnerable to climate-induced displacements, such as extreme weather events, increasing the risk of homelessness. This vulnerability is further pronounced for transgender individuals, who may encounter additional challenges in accessing gender-affirming services and secure housing during climate-related disasters. Insecure land tenure may also impede LBQ individuals' access to climate-resilient resources, hindering their ability to adapt to climate change through sustainable agriculture, conservation efforts, or climate-resilient infrastructure, because of legal and societal barriers hindering their access.

2.9 Healthcare and Climate Change

Healthcare is central to queer existence. It is also multifaceted and multi-layered with systemic and intersecting marginalisation ostensibly magnified by the COVID-19 global pandemic and decades of unaddressed climate change. Years of criminalisation have contributed to the inherent discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals in Kenya. At the same time, they encounter targeted discrimination in state policies, resulting in exclu-

sionary practices related to health, housing, and economic opportunities. This significantly limits their ability to effectively address the harm caused by the climate crisis. The deliberate exclusion of LBQ Kenyans by the heteronormative policies of both national and county governments has a profound impact on their ability to access suitable healthcare. In the face of inadequate housing and limited economic opportunities, LBQ individuals are even more affected by the adversities of climate disasters.

According to the Kenyan Human Rights Commission, LGBTIQ+ individuals in Kenya face significant discrimination and stigma when seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), counselling and other mental health services, HIV-related treatment, and gender-affirming care and support for transgender and intersex individuals. Due to the criminalisation of same-sex relationships in Kenya, there is a reluctance to truthfully answer doctors' questions, or disclose one's sexual orientation to medical professionals. This fear stems from concerns about potential arrest, harassment, breach of their privacy and confidentiality through the exposure of their sexual orientation to other professionals in the hospitals, discrimination, or the worry that healthcare services may be denied.

When we consider the health impacts of climate change on LBQ individuals, this pre-existing healthcare discrimination increases their vulnerability. Climate change introduces additional health risks, ranging from increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters to changes in disease patterns. Several studies have established a connection between women, health, and the environment, often making the case that women's health is uniquely and often adversely affected. Building on this premise, this research contends that the climate-induced healthcare outcomes for LBQ individuals in Kenya would be even more severe, due to the inherent systemic marginalisation.

Another potential disparity in healthcare is catalysed by homelessness, poverty, and housing discrimination, with LBQ individuals pushed to low-income, urban informal settlement areas. Globally, LGBTIQ+ individuals are at the highest risk of homelessness as they are not only kicked out of their homes once they are exposed as queer, but are often ostracised from their communities and forced to fend for themselves from young ages. This lack of social support increases homelessness and its compounding

factors such as poverty, lack of education, lack of healthcare, and exposure to dangerous drugs. Most landlords also evict LGBTIQ+ people, or surrender them to the police once they discover that they are queer. Most Kenyan LBQ individuals are at risk of being trafficked and being denied welfare resources, such as shelters for the homeless. A UN Habitat report points to these disparities, and argues for better governance structures to protect queer individuals.

Institutionalized heteronormativity also poses barriers when queer individuals seek insurance programs. It also blocks them from selecting their partners as the next of kin, thus jeopardizing their well-being and long-term social protections. In addition, LBQ persons are often denied agency, and sometimes sexually abused when seeking medical services, such as “forced HIV/STI testing, forced hormonal and shock therapy, forced anal and rectal examination by the police, or religious exorcism to “correct their queerness.” Also, gender-affirming medical services and SRHR services are not covered by most insurance programs, making it difficult for LBQ individuals to meet their healthcare needs.

It is evident, therefore, that in the wake of shifting climates an increment of climate-related disasters, LBQ individuals who already grapple with pre-existing discrimination will find themselves even more vulnerable, facing severe obstacles to essential healthcare access.

2.10 Climate Change and Disaster Response Mechanisms

Disaster emergency situations inflict severe harm on life or property, causing significant disruptions to societal functioning. The extreme nature of these disasters often surpasses available resources, hampering the government’s ability to respond effectively. Comprehensive disaster emergency planning is crucial to enable states to address suffering and anxieties promptly and competently during such crises. In the aftermath of the devastating El Niño floods that struck Kenya, claiming over 70 lives, and displacing 36,000 households, President William Ruto was prompted, by the escalating climate crisis, to establish a National Disaster Operation Centre for coordinated responses.

However, as the national response to the plight of El Niño victims unfolds, the invisibility of LBQ perspectives in crisis planning becomes glaringly evident. This invisibility raises crucial concerns about the inclusivity and effectiveness of disaster response mechanisms, without targeted support to the most vulnerable groups. Due to the already existing discrimination in employment, economic spheres, and healthcare, LBQ individuals rely heavily on state support. Neglecting their unique experiences during climate disasters heightens their risk of facing gender-based violence, homophobic violence and bullying, limited access to essential services including gender-affirming and sexual and reproductive healthcare, and economic insecurity during emergencies.

Respondents also expressed fear that, due to criminalisation, they are often overlooked in national disaster response mechanisms:

“Why would consideration be extended to us during climate emergencies when we are not even recognized by the law?”

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To the Government

- **Repeal Discriminatory Laws:** Decriminalise queer identities by repealing and eliminating archaic and colonial same sex laws.
- **Enact Inclusive Legislature:** that embraces gender diversity and affirms the wide spectrum of gender identities. Safeguard sexual orientation and gender identity within legislature that protects LBQ individuals, and all SGM.
- **Invest in Inclusive Disaster Response Mechanisms:** Fund inclusive disaster response mechanisms that recognize and address the unique vulnerabilities of marginalised groups. This can be achieved by forging both government-civil society and intra-civil society partnerships that will facilitate the incorporation of the needs, sensitivities, and expertise of the LBQ community into climate justice research.
- **Invest in Sustainable Urban Planning:** County and national governments should invest in sustainable urban planning, and smart, inclusive, and green cities to ensure safe and affordable housing. It is also within the mandate of the government to fix sanitation problems in cities, and improve green infrastructure such as recreational parks, public transport, public spaces, walking infrastructure, cycling infrastructure – all of which make cities more inclusive and livable. These have been proven to advance climate justice and improve mental healthcare for everyone, including LBQ residents.
- **Train Healthcare Personnel:** Partner with medical research institutions and grassroots LGBTIQ+ NGOs to train and support healthcare personnel to dispense their duties in healthcare without bias and stigma, so as to uphold their professional oaths and conduct themselves absent of discrimination.
- **Integrate Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Policy:** The research recommends infusing indigenous knowledge and practices into climate policy and climate justice, and

ensure that indigenous people are at the centre of the climate discourse, leveraging their unique cultural ties to the land for climate disaster prediction, mitigation, and ecosystem safeguarding.

- **Develop Tech-Driven GBV Solutions:** Foster collaborations among county governments, the Ministry of Information, Communication, and the Digital Economy, the Ministry of Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs, and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry alongside queer individuals. Collectively, innovate new strategies, like using tech to combat Gender-Based Violence. This can take several forms, such as the creation of safe online spaces, or enhancing GBV interventions through digital applications.

2. To LBQITGNC Organisations

- **Analyze and Map Climate Policies:** Examine how current climate policies address or fail to address the specific needs of LBQ individuals. Look at both international policies like the Paris Agreement and national policies like the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Additionally, explore other national climate commitments including Kenya's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and County Climate Policies. Join or support organisations that support climate justice, emphasizing the importance of considering diverse identities and experiences in climate policies.

- **Establish Climate Literacy and Awareness Programs for LBQs:** Strategically create advocacy programs that raise awareness on climate change impacts on LBQ individuals including training, environmental conservation activities like tree planting, climate justice fellowships, climate justice curriculums, festivals, activism etc. Empower LBQs as Climate Leaders, establishing initiatives that involve women from various backgrounds and positioning them as leaders in climate action.

- **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Conduct community-based workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns to challenge and debunk the unfounded beliefs linking the queer community to climate disasters. Engage religious leaders, community

elders, and influencers to promote a more inclusive and accurate understanding of climate change causes. Disseminate these research findings to the LGBTIQ+ community, as well as the general public.

• **Create Inclusive Environments that Empower LBQ Individuals Economically:** It is imperative to combat employment discrimination against LBQ individuals by championing and enforcing anti-discrimination laws in both formal and informal sectors. This advocacy extends to collaborating with businesses and employers to establish inclusive workplaces that recognize and appreciate the economic contributions of LBQ employees. This can be achieved by fostering awareness and equal opportunities to mitigate discrimination and ensure LBQ individuals thrive professionally. The research further recommends the creation of climate-resilient livelihoods and economic empowerment programs that provide opportunities for stable employment and income generation for LBQ individuals. This can be achieved by supporting skill development and entrepreneurship initiatives to reduce the economic vulnerability among LBQ individuals that contributes to homelessness.

• **Enhance the Food Security and Well-being of LBQ Communities in the face of Climate Challenges:** Facilitate community-led initiatives to address the impact of climate change on food security. This can be achieved by empowering LBQ individuals and their communities to participate in sustainable smart agriculture, agro-ecology, and conservation efforts. Additionally, promote knowledge-sharing and resilient farming practices.

• **Support Safe-Housing Initiatives:** Advocate for and support the establishment of safe houses that provide not only temporary accommodations, but also sustainably addresses the unique needs of the LBQ individuals facing homelessness.

• **Establish Safe Spaces Within Disaster Relief Centers:** Collaborate with government agencies and humanitarian organisations to establish safe spaces within disaster relief centers. Advocate for the allocation of resources to create and maintain these spaces, ensuring they provide protection from discrimination, GBV, and access to

gender-affirming and inclusive healthcare services. Additionally, advocate for funding and resources to empower local organisations, ensuring they play an active role in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

- ***Establish Training Programs for Emergency Responders:*** Take the lead in developing and implementing LBQ-inclusive training programs that equip responders with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively assist LBQ individuals during disaster situations. Provide anti-violence training for the first responders, including law enforcement, medical personnel, and humanitarian aid workers to ensure that they are equipped to recognize and respond to GBV, including the unique challenges faced by LBQ individuals during climate disasters.

- ***Advocate for Gender-Inclusive Disaster Preparedness and Response Strategies*** that specifically address the needs and vulnerabilities of LBQ individuals. This can be achieved by collaborating with disaster management agencies to ensure that evacuation plans, shelters, and relief efforts are designed to protect LBQ individuals from GBV. Actively engage in disaster response planning and execution, and advocate for recognition of LBQ organisations as key stakeholders in disaster response to the government, climate change organisations, and humanitarian organisations. Ensure LBQ involvement in decision-making processes related to disaster response. Contribute to the development of inclusive communication campaigns during disaster response efforts and ensure that information is disseminated in diverse formats, languages, and channels that effectively reach LBQ individuals.

- ***Advocate for inclusive Land Tenure Policies and Community-led Land Ownership Initiatives:*** Work towards the development and implementation of inclusive land tenure policies that recognize and protect the rights of LBQ individuals by collaborating with government agencies, policymakers, and advocacy groups to address gaps in existing land tenure regulations and ensure inclusivity. Additionally, support community-led initiatives that empower LBQ individuals to secure land ownership collectively. Lastly, encourage the formation of cooperatives or community land trusts that provide a shared and secure space for LBQ individuals to engage in agriculture, housing, and economic activities.

- ***Integrate Mental Health Support in Climate Disaster Response:*** Establish partnerships with mental health professionals to integrate mental health support services into disaster response mechanisms. Advocate for funding and resources to provide mental therapy services that address the intersection of discrimination and climate-induced anxieties.
- ***Advocate for Legal Protection of LBQ individuals:*** Collaborate with legal experts, human rights organisations, and activists to challenge discriminatory laws, ensure that climate LBQ refugees are recognized and protected under international law, and work towards the creation of inclusive legal environments.
- ***Advocate for Equal Access to Resources:*** such as clean water, healthcare, and education, recognizing the compounding effects of discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.
- ***Global Solidarity:*** Foster international collaboration to address the intersectionality of climate change and LGBTIQ+ rights. Share best practices and learnings to create a global network of support.

3. To Climate Justice Organisations

- ***Practice Inclusive Climate Advocacy:*** Incorporate LBQ perspectives into climate justice advocacy efforts, and recognize the intersections of discrimination and climate-related risks faced by LBQ individuals. Adopt an intersectional approach within climate justice frameworks that recognize that LBQ individuals may face multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation, and tailor climate justice initiatives to address these intersecting challenges. Advocate for and provide inclusive climate change advocacy spaces that challenge discrimination, animosity, and homophobia within these spaces, and work towards creating an environment where LBQ individuals can meaningfully participate.
- ***Train on LBQ Issues:*** Provide training for climate justice activists on LBQ issues and vulnerabilities to enhance understanding of the challenges faced by LBQ individuals,

and promote inclusive approaches within the climate justice movement.

- ***Collaborate with LBQ Organisations*** to ensure that climate justice initiatives are inclusive and address the specific needs of LBQ individuals. Recognize LBQ organisations as valuable partners in the fight for climate justice.

- ***Advocate for Inclusive Climate Policies***: Advocate for the inclusion of LBQ perspectives in climate policies at national and international levels and work towards policies that address the vulnerabilities of LBQ individuals in the face of climate change.

CONCLUSION

The climate crisis has emerged as an urgent global emergency. While it impacts everyone, it does not impact everyone equally. This research revealed multiple intersecting layers and routes through which LBQ people suffer disproportionate economic afflictions, healthcare challenges, social exclusion, political marginalisation, and ecological segregation, all of which increase their disproportionate exposure to climate risks and disasters. These climate challenges faced by LBQ individuals often go unnoticed due to the lack of mainstreaming, criminalisation, and adequate funding for research on this demographic. While other minority groups are legally recognized, LBQ individuals' sole interaction with the law is marked by oppression and erasure.

This invisibilises and minimises the unique ways in which LBQ persons are harmed by climate change and climate inaction both in Kenya, and in other places where they may migrate to as climate refugees. The study has equally highlighted how their economic, social, and geopolitical positioning places LBQ persons in uniquely dangerous positions once climate disasters strike.

The study shows that despite the oppression, LBQ persons continue to contribute to climate knowledge systems and are at the frontline of dismantling oppressive structures that escalate climate change, not just for their communities, but for everyone else. This research therefore illuminates the systemic barriers that climate change creates for LBQ individuals, hindering their ability to meaningfully enjoy their human rights and live with dignity.

APPENDIX

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ABOUT ICA

Innovators 4 Climate Action (ICA) is a non-profit LBQ-led Climate Justice Foundation registered in March 2023 under the Companies Act, 2015. ICA was established in response to the global climate crisis and its impacts in Kenya. There was a clear need for involvement of frontline communities, especially Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer (LBQ) women in climate action, in order to enhance the effectiveness of climate responses, promote social equity and resilience, and community ownership, in tackling the global climate crisis.

ICA uses intersectional feminist approaches to effectively address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. We believe that the perspectives and experiences of LBQ individuals who are disproportionately impacted by climate change must be actively included and integrated into climate action interventions. This means recognizing and addressing the various forms of oppression and inequality that intersect with climate change, and working towards solutions that are equitable and just for all.

We want an inclusive, dignified, and sustainable world free from climate change threats. Our mission is to innovate and promote just and sustainable climate action solutions in Kenya that centre the interests of Sexual and Gender Minorities. We seek to achieve this mission through Advocacy, Research, Capacity building, and Institutional Capacity Strengthening. We work in partnership with LBQ communities, civil society organizations, the private sector, and relevant government agencies to develop and implement effective, equitable, and sustainable climate resilience strategies that address the root causes of vulnerability and inequality.



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