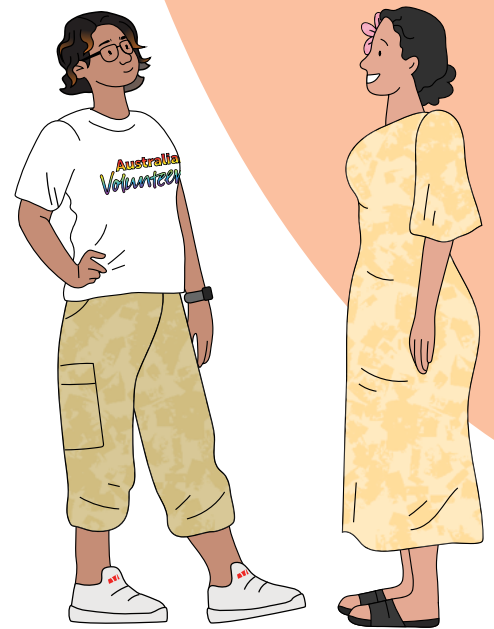


Pride Guide | Nepal



The Australian Volunteers Program strives to provide a safe, supportive and equitable environment for LGBTIQ+ volunteers, approved accompanying dependents, partner organisations and all program staff. The Australian Volunteers Program has supported volunteers with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in all program countries and has ongoing connections with community organisations in almost every country we work in.

Diverse SOGIESC program participants must be aware of the country context before undertaking an assignment. This guide is designed to introduce some key issues related to people with diverse SOGIESC and their participation in the program.

If you are a volunteer with diverse SOGIESC, you will need to:

- Do your own research. You will be required to follow the local laws, even if you disagree with them.
- Understand what the local law says you can and can't do when in-country;
- Be aware of what the legal protections are for LGBTIQ+ people in your destinations;
- Consider whether or not you are comfortable living and working in a place where you may be discriminated against and unable to live as openly as you can in some parts of Australia.

Language

Terminology may differ across urban and rural contexts, and across provinces or ethnic and cultural groups. Information sourced online can be outdated or inaccurate. For current and accurate information, please confirm with an appropriate diverse SOGIESC Civil Society Organisation (CSO) or ask your in-country team.

Legal and policy context

In 2007, Nepal decriminalised same-sex sexual acts, abolished discriminatory laws, established a committee to study the possibility of allowing same-sex marriage, and legally recognised a “third gender”. In 2013, Nepal began to issue legal documents (including passports) that recognised an ‘other’ gender category. However, in many respects Nepal still denies the equal rights and protections of diverse SOGIESC communities. Same-sex marriage and civil unions are not recognised by the state and gender affirming surgeries and treatment for transgender groups is not available.

Discrimination

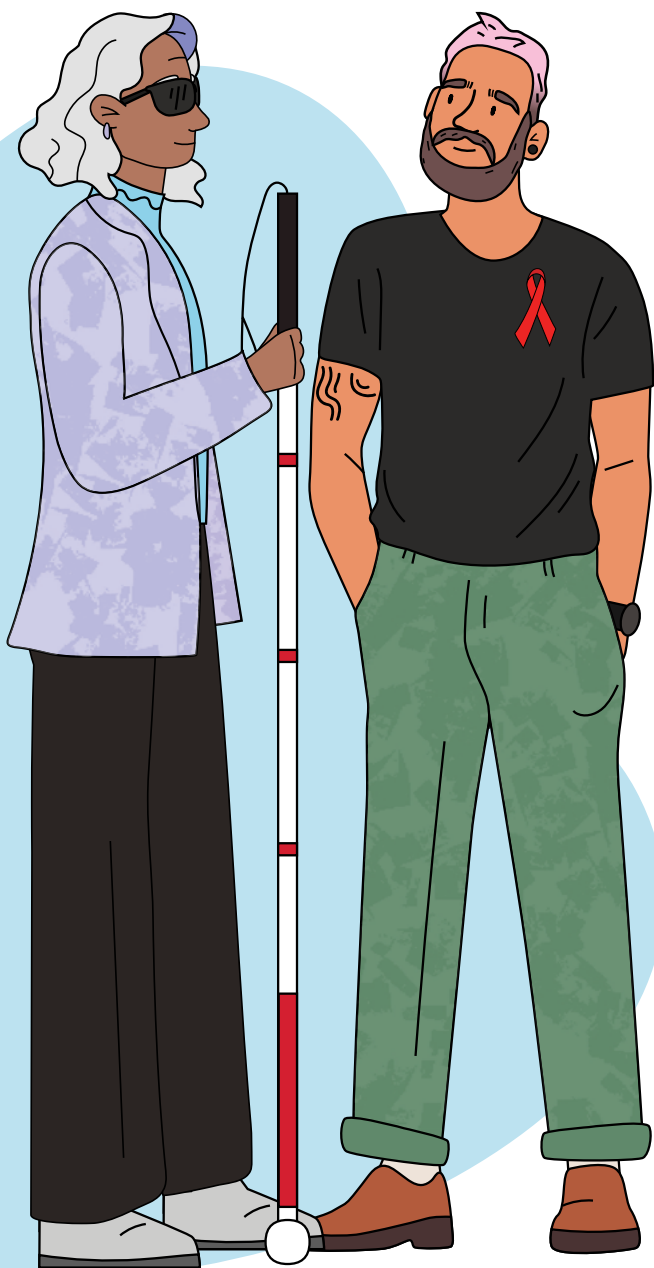
Some legal protections exist for people with diverse SOGIESC in Nepal. The State prohibits discrimination against inter alia in society and in the workplace, however discrimination still occurs. There are currently no laws that protect against hate crimes, incitement to hatred or violence based on one's SOGIESC.

Cultural and societal attitudes

In Nepal, patriarchal values and binary gender roles contribute to negative societal attitudes toward diverse SOGIESC communities. While there have been positive developments in the laws and acceptance of cultural third gender groups, stigma surrounding gender identity and sexual orientation remains.

Children are expected to reach adolescence and then find a partner for marriage. When families come to understand their child has diverse SOGIESC, they are often pressured to enter into heterosexual partnerships to “save face” within the community.

Cisgender men dominate public spaces in Nepal, whereas cisgender women are expected to limit their time in the public sphere, making it harder for them to ‘come out’ as lesbians.



Health and wellbeing

Diverse SOGIESC populations, in particular the transgender community, are hesitant to access healthcare services in fear of confidentiality breaches or discrimination. HIV/AIDS is a significant issue in the community, yet stigma and discrimination makes it hard for transgender people and men who have sex with men (MSM) to access appropriate healthcare.

Blue Diamond is a CSO supporting MSM and transgender women with HIV to enrol in treatment programs, and training healthcare workers to understand the needs of transgender and MSM community members.

It is not possible to receive gender affirming surgery as a transgender person in Nepal. Many individuals in the community rely on sex work to save enough money to go to Thailand or India for their surgeries. Non-surgical gender affirmation treatments such as hormones are also inaccessible.

The Nepalese Government has introduced a secondary school curriculum that incorporates diverse SOGIESC themes, and third gender public toilets have been introduced in some schools. Despite such advances, diverse SOGIESC youth still experience bullying in school and violence from their peers and teachers. Some teachers believe that diverse SOGIESC children can be “corrected”, and that if their “behaviour” continues, it may encourage other students to act or look like they do.

Media

Despite advances in the legal recognition and protections for people with diverse SOGIESC, traditional gender norms and heteronormative ideology continue to infiltrate mainstream media platforms.

Despite this, activists and civil society are using radio channels to communicate information and advice about diverse SOGIESC issues. They are also starting to use social media platforms to connect with their communities and share resources.