

Pride Guide | Kiribati



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 Information sourced online can be outdated or inaccurate.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.

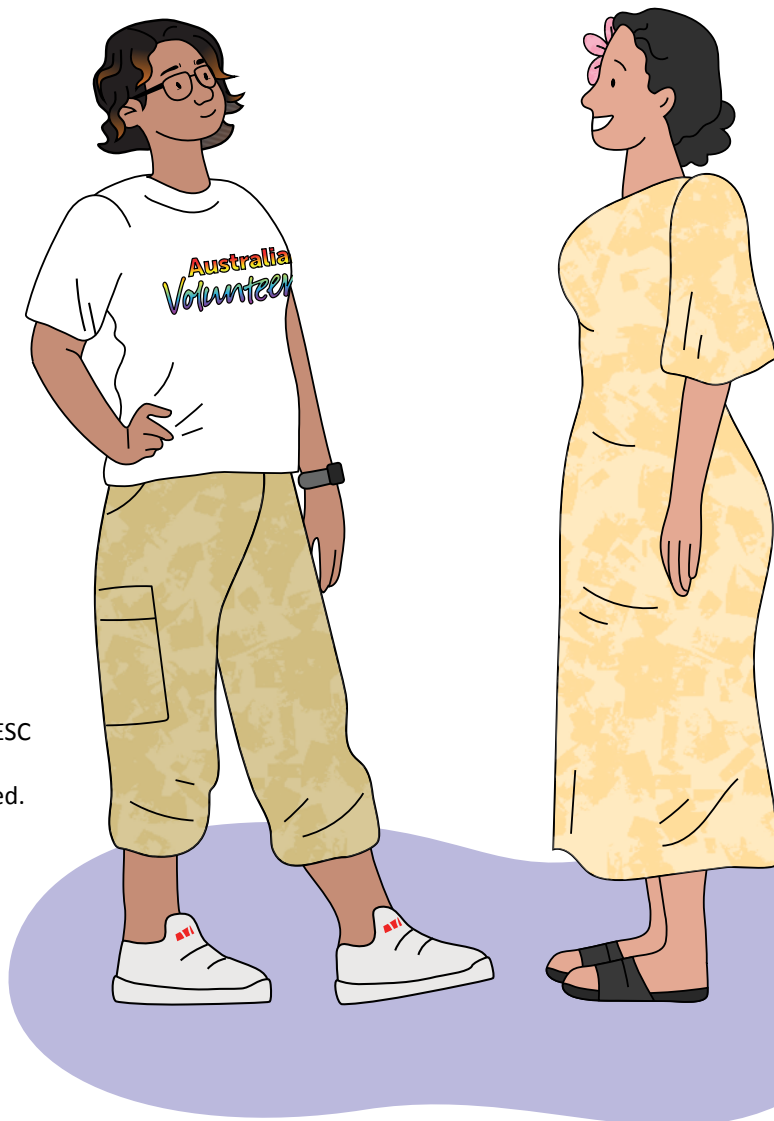
In one study, respondents stated that the terms 'transgender' and 'men who have sex with men (MSM)' were inadequate in representing their gender identities. Most in this study said they were "both male and female".

Legal and policy context

Same-sex sexual acts are criminalised in Kiribati with a maximum imprisonment term of 14 years. Men who commit acts of "gross indecency" with another man in public or in private have a maximum imprisonment term of five years. However, there have been no known enforcements of these laws.

Kiribati rejected recommendations to decriminalise same-sex acts in 2010 in its first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, and "noted" recommendations for decriminalisation and protections for SOGIESC individuals in anti-discrimination legislation. These were not adopted.

There is a Human Rights Officer who officially supports and recognises the plight of MSM and transgender women. In 2016, the government registered the first LGBTIQ+ CSO, called Boutokaan Inaomataia ao Mauriia Binabinaine Association (BIMBA).



Discrimination

Some legal protections exist for people with diverse SOGIESC in Kiribati. Workplace discrimination and termination of employment on the basis of sexual orientation is prohibited. These protections relate to a person's sexual orientation and not their gender identity or intersex status. There are no broad protections or constitutional protections for people with diverse SOGIESC, and there are no laws that protect against hate crimes or incitement to hatred on the basis of holding diverse SOGIESC.

Discrimination usually surrounds sexual orientation over gender identity. BIMBA is working with binabinaine to eradicate discrimination and stigma, providing advocacy trainings, services and a way of connecting with the community.

Cultural and societal attitudes

Traditional gender roles are a prevalent and integral part of Kiribatan society. Homosexuality is stigmatised, and many local communities regard homosexuality as immoral. However, MSM have found that when they are financially independent and have family members relying on their income, their sexuality or gender identity is likely to be "tacitly accepted".

Many MSM feel they are accepted by their families but are cautious about bringing their partner home for fear it would be "too confronting". Despite some feelings of acceptance, many MSM feel it is nearly impossible to have a long-term male partner, because of family and community disapproval. Some MSM and transgender women are able to be open about their identities and some are embraced by family and continue to live with them. In other cases, if families find out about their child's diverse SOGIESC, they may be forced to leave home.

Health and wellbeing

Transgender women and MSM report having regular health check-ups as part of their employment contracts. For unemployed MSM and trans women, contact with health services is limited and more difficult to access.

The Asia Pacific Trans Health Blueprint training package was created and disseminated to governments in 2018, to provide a resource for healthcare professionals, policymakers and community advocates on the specific health and wellbeing needs of trans communities. No reports demonstrate if or how the package is being used in Kiribati.

Diverse SOGIESC themes are not covered in the school curriculum. In some cases where family members find out about their child's diverse SOGIESC, they will be forced by the family to drop out of school. CSO BIMBA is conducting awareness programs in schools to help support diverse SOGIESC youth, and change societal attitudes surrounding homosexuality.