

# The Plight of LGBTQ+ Individuals in Nigeria

## Barriers to Accessing Healthcare Services

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LGBTQ+ individuals in Nigeria face serious structural, legal, and social barriers that significantly limit access to essential healthcare services. The Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act of 2014 has created a climate of fear and criminalization, discouraging many from seeking care openly due to risks of harassment, arrest, blackmail, or violence. Healthcare discrimination is widely reported. Some individuals experience denial of services, stigmatizing language, moral judgment, or breaches of confidentiality within health facilities. Fear of exposure prevents many from accessing HIV testing, antiretroviral therapy (ART), sexually transmitted infection screening, and preventive services such as PrEP and PEP. International funding cuts have weakened HIV programs supporting key populations. In some areas, consultation fees have been introduced for ARV refills, creating financial barriers for low-income individuals. Drug stock-outs, transportation costs, and stigma-related fears further increase treatment interruptions, leading to higher viral loads and increased public health risks. Beyond HIV care, LGBTQ+ persons often experience depression, anxiety, trauma, and social isolation due to family rejection, unemployment, and community hostility. Access to safe and affirming mental health services remains limited.

### Key Barriers to Healthcare Access:

- Criminalization and fear of arrest or harassment
- Healthcare discrimination and breaches of confidentiality
- Consultation fees for ARV refills
- Drug shortages in public facilities
- Limited LGBTQ+-affirming mental health services
- Community stigma, violence, and exclusion

# Human Rights and Public Health Implications

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The exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals from healthcare services represents both a human rights violation and a public health challenge. Treatment interruption among people living with HIV increases viral load, heightens transmission risks, and contributes to drug-resistant strains. When marginalized communities are excluded, national HIV prevention and control efforts are weakened. Community-based organizations serve as critical lifelines by providing discreet referrals, treatment adherence counseling, emergency financial support, and safe spaces. However, these organizations often operate with limited funding and face regulatory and security constraints. Addressing these barriers requires inclusive healthcare policies, anti-discrimination training for healthcare providers, sustainable domestic funding mechanisms, and stronger confidentiality protections. Strengthening partnerships between government institutions and community-led organizations is essential to rebuild trust. Ensuring equitable healthcare access will reduce preventable deaths, improve mental health outcomes, lower HIV transmission rates, and promote dignity and inclusion. A resilient health system must serve all Nigerians equally, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Advancing inclusive healthcare is critical to achieving national and global public health goals and ensuring that no community is left behind.

*Prepared for advocacy, donor engagement, and humanitarian awareness purposes.*