



RAINBOW
RAILROAD

A NEW YEAR IN THE
**FIGHT FOR
LGBTQI+
FREEDOM**

Donor Impact Report, Spring 2024

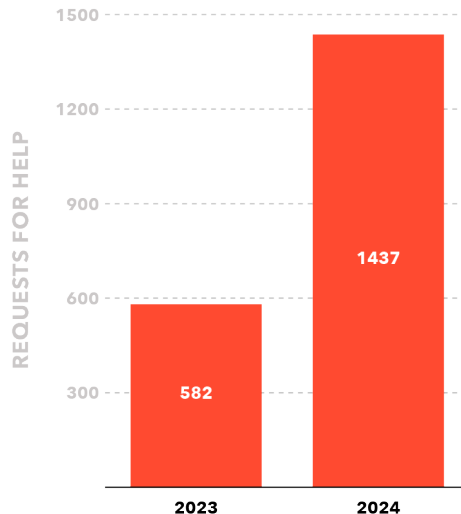




2024: LOOKING AHEAD TO A YEAR OF ADVOCACY & TRANSFORMATION

As we settle into the first few months of 2024, our vital work unfolds against a challenging backdrop of a continued rise in anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and legislation around the world, and in our own communities. In January alone, we received 1,437 requests for help, a 59% increase in requests compared to the previous year, underscoring the escalating demand for our crucial work and the urgency of our mission of getting at-risk LGBTQI+ individuals to a safer place.

Some of the countries from which the most requests for help originate – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uganda and Kenya – illustrate the widespread nature of the challenges we confront. In this report, you'll also have the opportunity to read more about our current response efforts in Uganda, enabled by your support.



AT A GLANCE

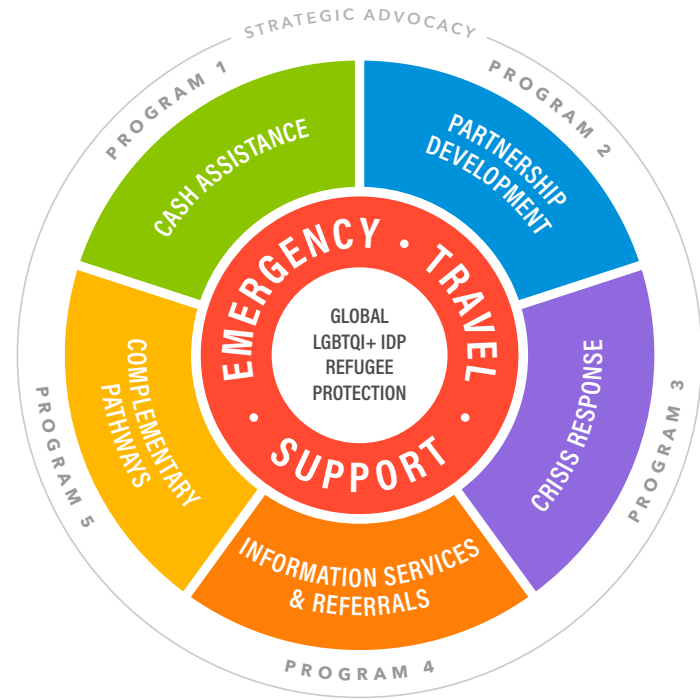
- SECTION 1 - 2024: LOOKING AHEAD
- SECTION 2 - BINTANG'S JOURNEY
- SECTION 3 - CRISIS IN FOCUS
- SECTION 4 - A NEW CHAPTER



Amid these difficulties, we share a story of hope and transformation that was made possible by your contributions – a newcomer who fled persecution in Indonesia whose life has been transformed since relocating to New York. As this long-time activist builds a new life with dignity in New York, they're creating home and belonging for themselves, and the growing community of forcibly displaced queer people who relocated to the U.S. and need support.

As Rainbow Railroad continues to sustainably grow, we strive to center the voices, perspectives and experiences of the people we support, ensuring our programming and advocacy are informed by their lived expertise. This is a key organizational focus, and in the report, you'll learn more about how we're bringing this vision to life with several new initiatives this year.

The urgency of our mission persists, demanding an intensified response to provide crucial aid and advocacy where it is most needed so that we can keep queering the system to create an increasing number of safe pathways for LGBTQI+ people to get to safety. Read on to learn more about these unfolding developments and witness firsthand the impact of your support and partnership.





CREATING HOME & BELONGING

BINTANG'S JOURNEY

**"When I reached out to
Rainbow Railroad, it was the first time
I asked for help. I used to keep my own
suffering to myself."**





A JOURNEY OF ACTIVISM & SELF-DETERMINATION

As a long-time activist for the LGBTQI+ community, Bintang was used to advocating for others, but having to ask for help for themselves was a new experience. In Indonesia, where they lived for the first 21 years of their life, they founded an organization that advocates for the LGBTQI+ community, while also being active in the feminist movement.

Bintang, who uses all pronouns, grew up facing persecution from her own family and the broader community because of her identity. She didn't consider leaving Indonesia until 2022, when she attended the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) World Conference in Los Angeles and learned about Rainbow Railroad. A friend of Bintang encouraged them to reach out to the organization, and although they were initially hesitant, their friend reminded them, "If you don't help yourself, you can't help other people." A few months later, Bintang reached out to Rainbow Railroad for support, and in 2023, they relocated to New York.

A NEW BEGINNING POWERED BY ADVOCACY

In New York, Bintang was able to secure housing through his own persistence, and is currently searching for employment. He hopes to find work that combines his two passions – [human rights](#) and [fashion](#).

Even in seeking services for themselves, Bintang takes an activist approach. They advocate for forcibly displaced individuals while connecting with LGBTQI+ organizations in New York. In May of 2023, Bintang attended [Advocacy Days](#) in Washington, DC, hosted by Refugee Council USA, alongside a group of individuals who relocated to the United States with the help of Rainbow Railroad. Together, they met with members of Congress to advocate for legislation and funding to support refugees, asylees, stateless people, and others seeking refuge in the United States.

Bintang looks forward to finding more opportunities to advocate from their own lived experiences.

“There will always be brighter days ahead. It is okay to accept that you are vulnerable, and it is okay to ask for help.”





CRISIS IN FOCUS

UGANDA'S LGBTQI+ COMMUNITY & THE IMMEDIATE NEED FOR SUPPORT

Nearly a year after the signing of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 (AHA23) into law, we continue to respond to the urgent needs of the local LGBTQI+ community.

In 2023, Rainbow Railroad received over 1,399 requests for help from Uganda – more than any year in our organization's history. An alarming 81% of these requests were received following the law's adoption. In the first two months of 2024, we've seen a 49% increase in requests for assistance compared to the same period in 2023. This increase in requests for help from individuals and our partners on the ground underscores the gravity of the situation. Notably, Uganda is among the top countries where we're receiving requests for support in 2024, a stark indicator of the escalating challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals.



We continue to receive disturbing reports of persecution that include loss of employment, torture, suicide, violent arrests and evictions of LGBTQI+ people.

The media may have stopped reporting on the dire situation, but the reality on the ground for queer people has worsened. We remain deeply concerned – and need your continuous assistance. This has also had an impact on the wider region, causing an increase in requests for help from neighboring Kenya.

Currently, with limited pathways to safety, our efforts are focused on supporting local partner organizations and providing vital services, including shelter, access to medical care, bail funding and legal aid services, and advocacy for the LGBTQI+ community as they challenge AHA23.



MERRYLAND HIGH SCHOOL

“Strive To Excel, God Perfects”

SAY NO TO HOMOSEXUALITY

TO AVOID THE FOLLOWING CONSEQUENCES:

- Prohibited by God
- Organ damage especially the rectum & Anal System
- Imprisonment
- Suicidal thoughts
- Self hatred
- Drug & Substance addiction
- Emotional Imbalances
- Mental disturbances
- Loss of respect
- Rectal cancer
- Public nuisance
- HIV/AIDS
- Death



“Be a good student and safe.

Let us fight this vice together. Avoid Peer Influence”

From the Guidance & Counselling Department



THANKS TO YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

144 INDIVIDUALS

who were incarcerated because of their LGBTQI+ identity, received bail funding from us.

13 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

working tirelessly to fight against AHA23 in Uganda, received our support.

One of those organizations provides shelter to 300 at-risk LGBTQI+ Ugandans who have been made homeless because of AHA23.

More recently, another partner organization's safehouse was raided by the police. Because of you, we were able to relocate the safehouse so we could continue to provide safety to individuals fleeing persecution from their own family and community. In Uganda, safehouses are a site of refuge and hope for many queer people who need food, hormone therapy, mental health support, HIV testing and treatment, education on personal security and safety, and legal education to understand the implications of AHA23.

We will continue to keep you updated on this crisis. For more information about our vital work in Uganda and other countries, please contact: donations@rainbowrailroad.org



A NEW CHAPTER

TRANSFORMING LGBTQI+ REFUGEE EXPERIENCES

The journey for many newcomers doesn't end upon arrival to a new, safer country; newcomers may face challenges securing employment as we saw in Bintang's journey, accessing essential services, and building community after resettlement. As an organization that supports LGBTQI+ individuals experiencing forced displacement, we know that our work must be informed by the lived experience and expertise of the individuals we serve.



To better respond to LGBTQI+ refugees' resettlement needs, Rainbow Railroad is developing new initiatives, including an internship program, a queer refugee community support network, and a queer refugee ambassador program. These initiatives recognize the unique challenges faced by queer and trans newcomers, offering specialized resources and guidance tailored to their interests and circumstances in an effort to ensure that they have a positive relocation outcome.

We do a disservice to refugees if we do not help them to find community and live sustainably in the new countries they now call home.

The internship program will provide valuable professional development opportunities, facilitating the empowerment of refugees to build skills and access employment opportunities in their new countries. The ambassador program will prepare and offer a platform for LGBTQI+ refugees to share their stories and amplify their advocacy efforts among audiences worldwide. It will also continue their work to effect change in the countries they had to flee, as well as strengthen support systems in their new home countries. Finally, the queer refugee community support network will connect newly arrived refugees with refugee leaders and mentors who will provide essential resources, advice, cultural understanding, and a sense of belonging as they navigate the complexities of resettlement and integration.

Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive approach to supporting LGBTQI+ refugees, ensuring they receive the assistance they need to thrive in the place they now call home. You can get involved in this new critical component of our work by reaching out to:

[**community@rainbowrailroad.org**](mailto:community@rainbowrailroad.org)

Together we can strengthen the systems and build the programs that are critical to our growth, influence governments to act now, and reach more people than ever before who need us to help them find safety. To stay up to date on our activities, you can sign up to receive our monthly newsletter on our website or follow us on our social media platforms. If you have questions about how you can support our ongoing work, reach out to:

[**donations@rainbowrailroad.org**](mailto:donations@rainbowrailroad.org)



401 Richmond Street West
Suite 360, Toronto,
ON M5V 3A8

575 5th Avenue, Unit 15-135
New York, NY.
10017 USA

info@rainbowrailroad.org
www.rainbowrailroad.org

