



Challenging Issues: Changing Lives

Case Work Report

2019



Pliny Soocoormanee

www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Peter Tatchell Foundation case work report for 2019 – Challenging Issues: Changing Lives. The report is being presented later this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

It documents our work giving advice, support and practical aid to individuals who are victims of injustices, such as discrimination and hate crime.

We are particularly proud of our success in helping to win asylum in the UK for refugees fleeing persecution by repressive regimes.

Despite our limited size and funding, the Peter Tatchell Foundation still manages to make a positive difference to the lives of many people every year. Since 2012, we have helped nearly 1,500 people. Special thanks to Pliny Socoormanee, Executive Officer, and to our volunteers Jonathan and Chia-Jung, Jao.

All of this was only made possible with the incredible support of our amazing donors – our success starts with your generosity. If you feel touched by what you read in this report, please consider [making a gift](#) to help us continue this work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy N. Hooke'.

Jeremy N. Hooke Esq. DipFA MLIBF
Chairman, Peter Tatchell Foundation

1. About us:

The Peter Tatchell Foundation (PTF) works for universal human rights, including, very importantly, LGBT+ human rights. The aims and objectives of the PTF are to increase awareness, understanding, protection and implementation of human rights, in the UK and worldwide. This involves research, education, advice, case work, publicity, lobbying and advocacy for the enforcement and furtherance of human rights law.

Through our case work, we are making a tangible, positive difference to the lives of people who have suffered discrimination and hate crime and those who are seeking refugee status. One of our great strengths is our ability to respond professionally and compassionately to calls for help wherever they are from.

2. Requests for help:

The Peter Tatchell Foundation receives requests for help from all over the UK and around the world.

Very often people contacting us are depressed, harassed and emotionally drained. The PTF is a small organisation with limited resources. Despite this, we assist people in a number of ways (see diagram right).

This case work service is provided free of charge and funded by our donors, to whom we are very grateful.



Fig 1. How We Help

3. Key facts:

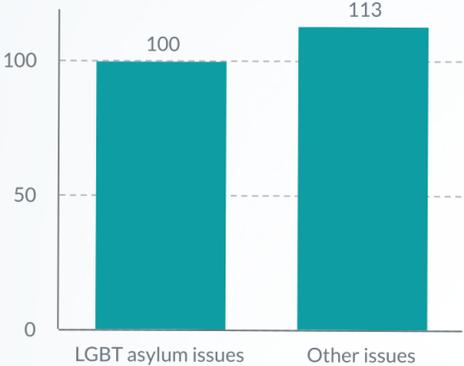


Peter Tatchell Foundation
Speaking out for Human Rights

Case work 2019

We receive requests for help from all over the UK and around the world and despite our small size and limited resources we assist people by listening to their concerns, providing moral support & hope, guiding them with information and advice and referring them to appropriate specialist agencies

The People We Help



Category	Number of People
LGBT asylum issues	100
Other issues	113

The biggest single category of people contacting us are those seeking asylum because they are being persecuted for being LGBT+

Unhappy Unions

This year we have illustrated two cases of forced marriage and persecution of LGBT+ people



Kaymar



Rehema

We have also assisted people facing a number of other human rights issues such as discrimination, hate crime, harassment and police malpractice



The Commonwealth

34 out of 54 commonwealth countries criminalise homosexuality

We helped 167 people from the Commonwealth

Main Countries




64 people from UK




37 people from Pakistan




21 people from Bangladesh

Global Reach



Since 2012 we have helped nearly 1500 people





In 2019 we helped 213 people



1/3 of the people we helped are from UK



We helped people from 47 countries

4. Why do people come to us:

We are known for getting things done. Peter Tatchell is a nationally and internationally renowned human rights defender with over fifty-one years' experience. It is this high profile that makes the Peter Tatchell Foundation the first point of contact for help on issues such as discrimination, asylum, harassment and hate crime, particularly for LGBT people.

5. Some of the people we helped:

Kaymar, Background: The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with five other nations, has laws that imposes the death penalty on consensual same-sex acts. According to every measure, Iran is one of the least LGBT tolerant nations on earth. Sexual activity between members of the same sex is frequently punished by imprisonment, corporal punishment, or execution.



Article 234 of Iran's law provides that 'lavat' – defined under Article 233 as penetrative anal intercourse between men – is punishable with the death penalty

The homophobic collusion between the state and the police force normalizes the everyday discrimination or outright hate crimes against LGBT community.

Kamyar* was persecuted and forced into marriage and he finally fled Iran.

Kaymar's own words:

I am Kamyar, a teacher from Iran. People working for the Iranian government are always expected to be religious, and compliant with Islam and official government policy. Being homosexual is a red line for the government and marriage is compulsory if you want to stay employed in governmental jobs. People will assume you are gay if you are not married. I refused for many years but aged forty the pressures were too much for me to bear.



In my case, the authorities kept inspecting me and kept reports labelled me as homosexual. The homophobic harassment started when I was about 30 which caused at work. Threats were made and I was pressured to attend a 'meeting' at the Department of Security and Information. They wanted a written commitment that I would marry.

I was also a protestor against the Iranian Islamic regime. They knew about it by spying on my lectures, monitoring my online activity, articles I had published in newspapers and websites even ones when I had covered my tracks using pseudonym.

I secretly collaborated with IRQR (Iranian LGBT organisation based in Canada) writing articles for their magazine as well; they knew this as well.



I was in danger of being dismissed from my job, imprisoned and even death. I did not want to leave my family and beloved country so hiding my sexuality was all I could think to do.

My situation was dire as the authorities knew my every move. I decided to get married with a lesbian or an asexual woman hoping this would solve my problems. To my surprise, one of my female students proposed to me. I suggested a marriage without sex and she agreed. I was thinking she might be a queer or perhaps an asexual but I was wrong. She was just thinking to entrap me in marriage. We got married, and the struggles started from the first day and it only got worse and worse.

She demanded sex and it was really impossible fighting with her every day; but I was obliged to go on with it. I was still regularly inspected and monitored by the government. It was really tough to remain silent, not be myself and have sex in a loveless marriage.



My marriage was one big psychological trauma. I made myself busy all day long. The only time I relaxed was when I slept.

She opened our secret to some of her friends and her family so I pretended I was asexual. I tried to divorce her several times, but she wanted to keep me in any condition and this added further pressures. She even threatened to report me to the authorities.

Iran is a country where people just disappear including many LGBTs. I knew I could have been snatched at work or even off the streets.

I had limited financial resources and did not know what to do. I was alive but I did not live like a human being.

I contacted many LGBT organisations including the Peter Tatchell Foundation. I knew I needed to build a support network.

I decided to get out of Iran and seek asylum. However, all my attempts like job applications abroad and European visa applications failed. I even tried entering a human trafficking line to Turkey but that didn't work.

My wife and her family kept upon the threats and again refused my request for divorce and insisted to keep me in that terrible life even though they were suffering too.

Finally, obtaining help from some of my friends, I secretly got a visa for Belgium and miraculously fled.

At present, I have already claimed asylum in Belgium. It does not mean that my problems are over. I still wake up with nightmares of returning to Iran every night. Recovery has begun but it will be slow.

My secret has been revealed by my ex-wife so I face death if I ever return to Iran. Even my own family and some of my friends have disowned me.



But I am alive. I can and will rebuild a new life where being gay doesn't mean fear of execution.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation has been a lifeline for Kaymar and has been with him on his long struggle over 3 years. Today we are happy to report that Kaymar has been granted refugee status in Belgium and he is starting a new life. A life full of opportunities and where he can be himself.

*Kaymar is a pseudonym we have used to protect his identity.

Rehema, Background: Uganda

Uganda is one of the most homophobic county in Africa. The severe homophobic persecution in Uganda is on-going and well documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Homophobic violence is a real threat, with reported incidents where known or suspected LGBT+ people have been beaten to death by anti-gay vigilantes. In late November 2019, Ugandan police rounded up 125 people in a gay-friendly bar in the capital, Kampala, dozens of whom now face charges. LGBT+ people struggle be themselves and Rehema is one of them.



Rehema story in her own words:

It has taken me great courage to open up about my story. I am still learning English but I wanted to share what I have gone through in the hope that people understand my journey.

I am from Uganda and my life has not been an easy one. I felt different and I did not open up to anyone. Most of the people around me thought same sex attraction was a grave sin. While at school, my parents found out I was attracted to woman. They said I was being shameful, and they beat me believing it would cure me. My parents decided that the best way to correct this deviancy was to marry me to a man. I was 16 and just wanted to be free.



The years I spent married were painful. Everyday, I asked myself why I was in this situation and why my parents objected so much? I spent 15 years in this marriage without love, without hope and without a future. My husband forced himself on me several times. When I resisted, I was again beaten. Every time, this made me even more desperate. Some days, I just wanted everything to end. During this time, I bore 4 children.

I had a friend though. Another woman that I got close to. I visited her several times. We pretended to be friends but became lovers. It felt so right to be simply with her. I started to have hope again. Little did I know that my husband was suspicious and he began spying on me. One day he followed me to the house of my friend. In our excitement, we forgot to lock the door properly and he came in.

There he found us kissing. I could see the rage in his eyes when he started beating me and my lover. She managed to escape when he focused his hate on me. I was on the ground begging, he spat and kicked me. He told me I was a disgrace that he would kill me and I did not deserve to live. While my husband was beating me, he was yelling and making a lot of noise. This attracted the attention of neighbours and members of the community. So, when he was trying to explain them what had happened, that is when I got the chance to run away and escape.

I was all black and blue and I escape for my life. I know that he would have told my parents and they would have thought that I brought shame on the family. They would have killed me if they could. I went into hiding with one of the few friends I had. The few people that I trusted told me that my husband and my family were actively looking for me. I feared for the worst and decided I could no longer live a life in permanent fear. I came to the UK to seek a safe heaven. A land where I would not be persecuted for who I was.



Of my 4 children, none wanted to hear from me except one. She even told me not to come as my husband would kill me. It was very painful for me to be rejected by the children that I did raise, and I hope they are happy where there are today. I never heard again about my partner. Moreover, she did not have any contact number that I would call.

I applied for asylum in 2015 and five years later I have made no progress. The Home Office refused to believe that I was a lesbian. It has been very hard for me since as I have

been living in fear of being deported back to Uganda. This would be a death sentence to me. Some nights, I have nightmares seeing my husband and my family beating me up. Just being in England has given me a new hope. I hope that this ordeal will be over. I have hope that I will be able to start a new life.

6. Case work in brief:

Since 2012, we have assisted nearly 1,500 people.

In 2019, we have reached out to 213 individuals who requested assistance. Many of these individuals required extensive correspondence and support. This is illustrated in Fig 2. Case work over the years.

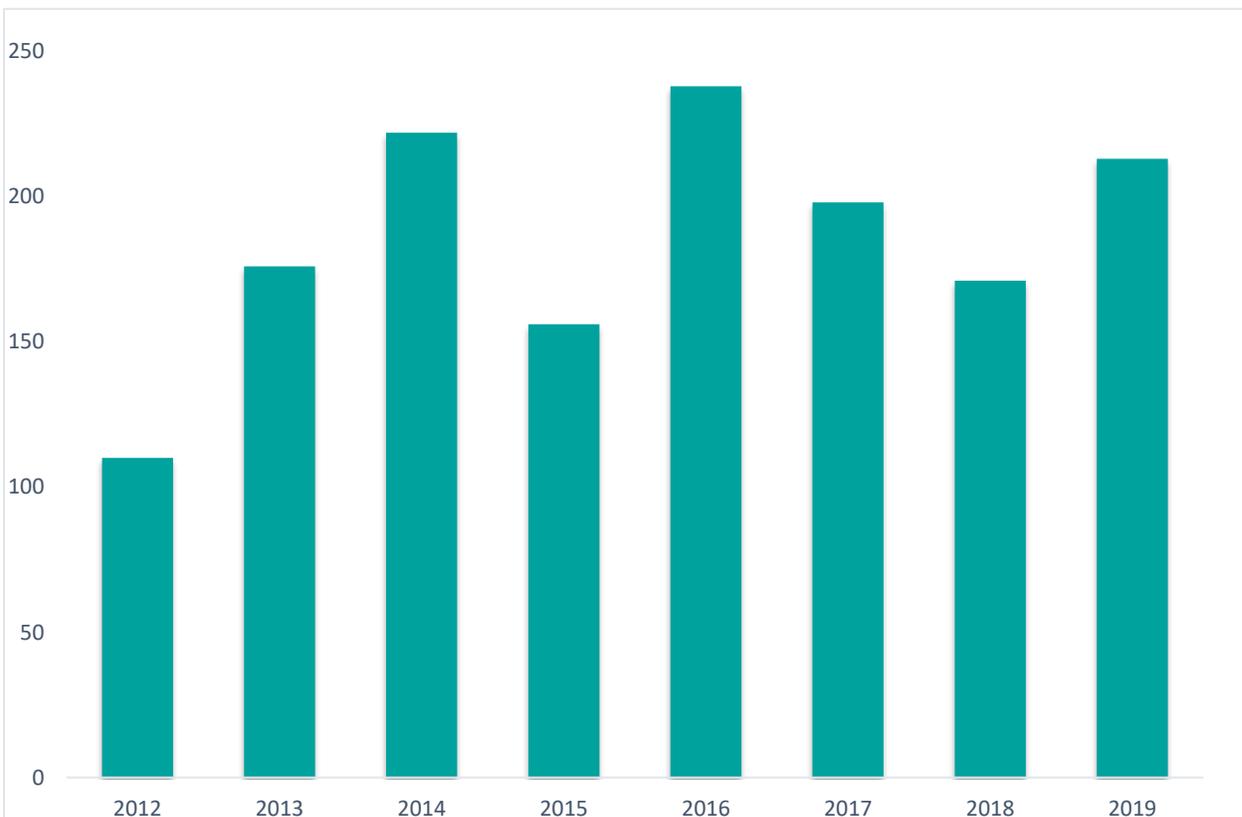


Fig 2. Case Work Over the Years

7. Global reach:

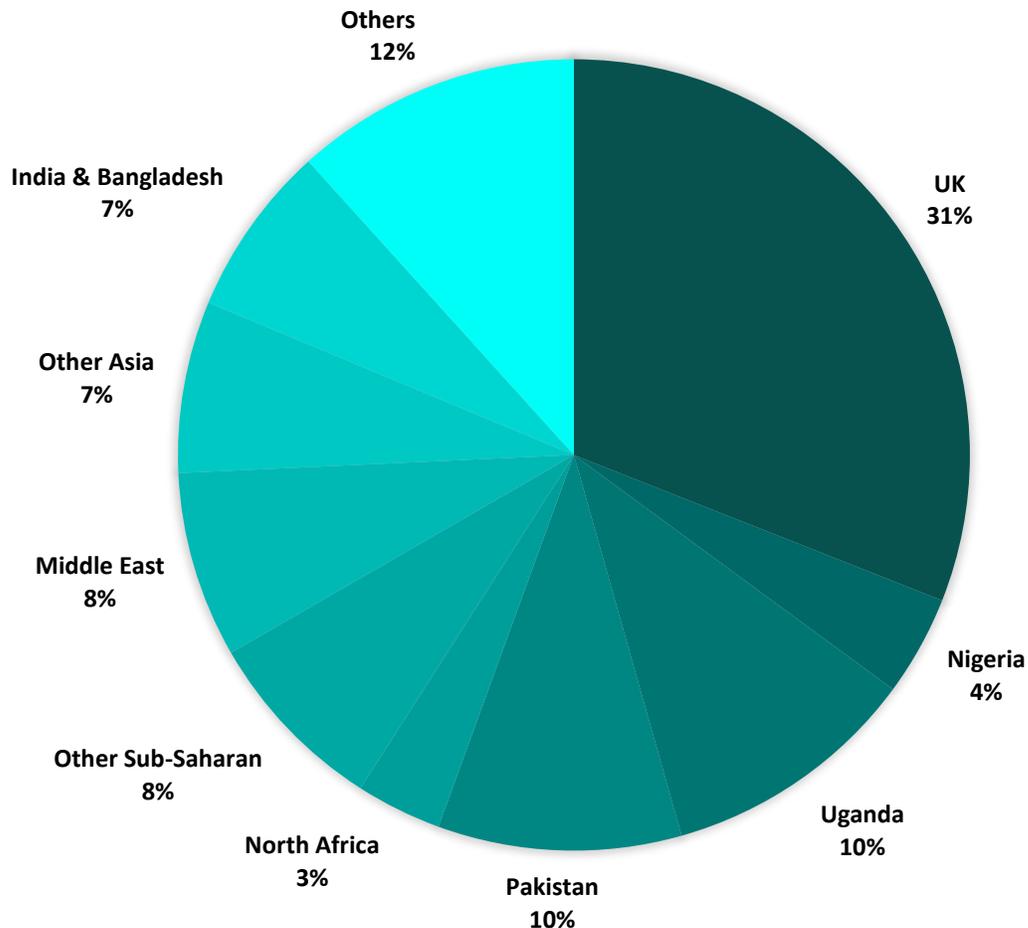


Fig 3. Case Work: Requests for Help by Country of Origin

Around 70% of people we help have an international background. Three quarters of them are from the Commonwealth, which remains a bastion of homophobia with 34 out of 54 countries still criminalising homosexuality. Nine impose life imprisonment. In parts of two Commonwealth countries, Nigeria and Pakistan, homosexuality can result in a death sentence.

We have helped people from 47 different countries, namely: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Brunei, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, DRC, Egypt, Germany,

Ghana, Gibraltar, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi-Arabia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, UAE, Uganda, UK, USA, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

8. The range of issues:

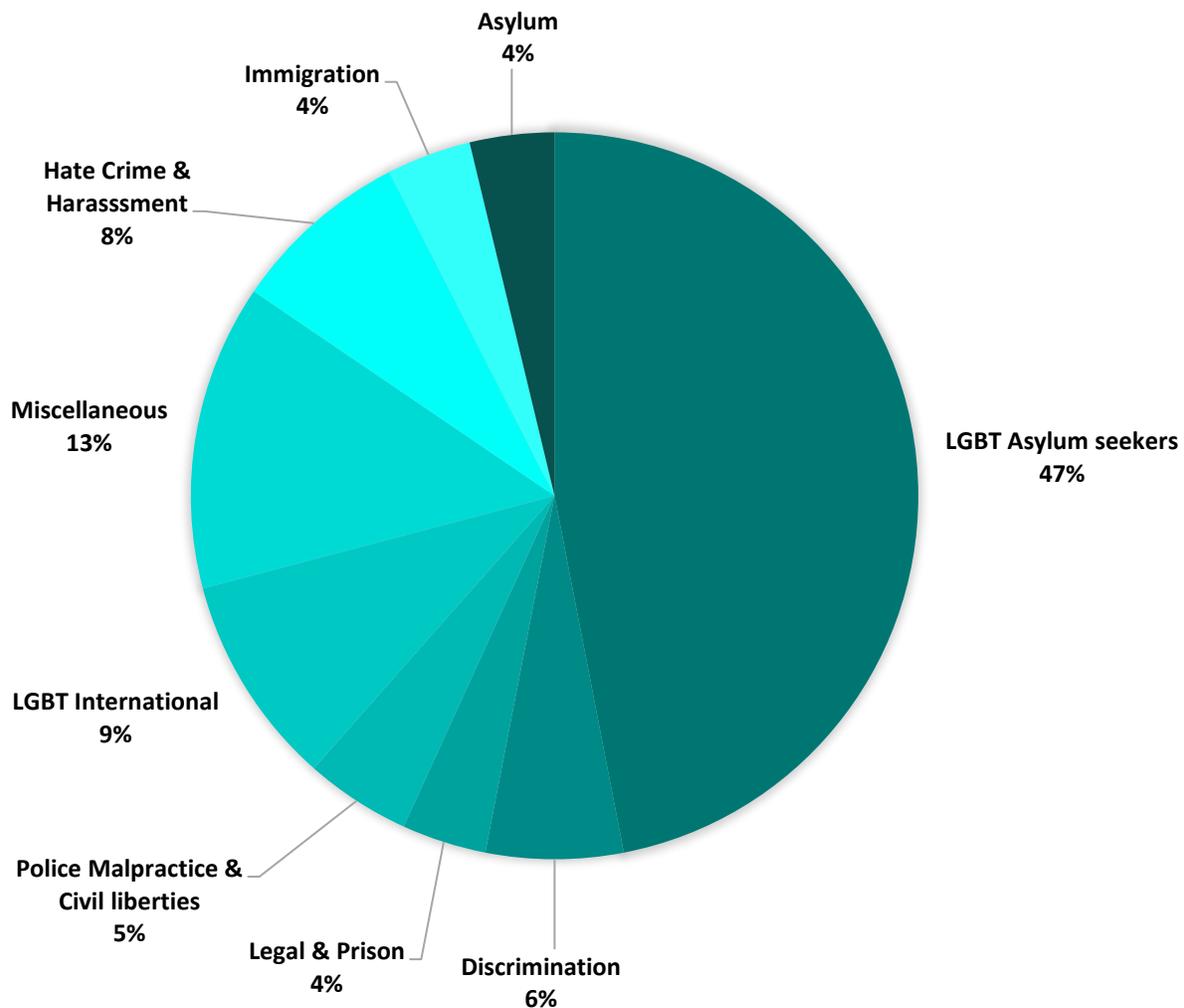


Fig 4. Case Work: the Range of Issues

A significant number of calls for help we receive are from people seeking asylum based on their sexual orientation.

LGBT+ asylum seekers face a number of challenges if they are to obtain refugee status.

One of the requirements of the Home Office is that LGBT+ asylum seekers provide evidence of their sexuality. There is minimal guidance on how this can be achieved.

LGBT+ asylum seekers often describe the stress they undergo during their interviews with staff of the Home Office.

While their case is being processed, they are not allowed to work and often there is a huge delay in processing their applications. In extreme cases, it has been known to take up to thirteen years.

Furthermore, the UK has one of the biggest detention systems in Europe and there is currently no time limit on the length of detention. Many asylum seekers are fearful of deportation as they rightly assume that it could well mean a death sentence.

The foundation has also assisted people on many different issues including discrimination, hate crime, homophobic hate crime and civil liberties. The category LGBT-int represents LGBT+ people from different countries seeking non-asylum advice.



9. Support our work:

Please consider donating to the Peter Tatchell Foundation to cover the cost of helping someone who comes to us in need.

The Peter Tatchell Foundation depends entirely on individual donations. We do not receive any statutory funding. Whatever you can give is greatly appreciated. No donation is too small for us.

Everything we have done to support these people is thanks to our amazing supporters.

You can make a donation by visiting our website:
www.PeterTatchellFoundation.org/donate

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