



***For immediate release:

The Refugee Coalition of East Africa launches
The LGBTQI SPARK Fund
Sustainable Programs for Autonomous Refugees in Kenya

NAIROBI, KENYA –The **Refugee Coalition of East Africa** is thrilled to announce **The SPARK Fund**, a program through which LGBTQI refugee entrepreneurs in Kenya can receive funding and mentorship to launch or expand a small business idea. The program will be supported via a partnership with ALL OUT and their Grassroots Economic Empowerment initiative.

RefCEA and All Out's strategic objectives align in this effort to empower LGBTQI communities in East Africa. Through this partnership, The SPARK Fund will provide financial support of refugees struggling with economic insecurity within LGBTQI communities in East Africa in order to facilitate sustainable, autonomous sources of income. The aim is to help these individuals get out of the cycle of poverty through their own direction and ingenuity. Funding will be delivered through online promotion of these business ventures to All Out and RefCEA's global supporter base under the auspices of All Out's Grassroots Economic Empowerment worldwide initiative.

Successful applicants will be paired with experienced business leaders around the world who will provide guidance and support to further develop business plans that outline the case for investment. The business investment ideas will be presented via email and social media appeals to a global audience. The presentations will include text, images, and/or video-based personal stories about the Entrepreneurs seeking investment and a link to a more detailed business plan that will have been developed in association with these mentors.

With over 650 known LGBTQI refugees in Kenya, with several hundred more in other East African countries, and due to prevalent homophobia in East and Central Africa, many LGBTQI individuals are forced to flee their homes, seeking safety and anonymity. According to a 2017 study out of Oxford University of MSM cis men and transgender women, the unemployment rate for recent migrants and refugees in this population is greater than 50%, while the average number of dependents of these same individuals is nearly 14 per person. The prevalence of prejudice against LGBTQI refugees in East Africa makes employment under these circumstances a near impossibility, creating a staggering need for sustainable sources of self-employment income both for the individual Entrepreneur and for their chosen families.

The launch of the SPARK Fund aims to provide sustainable economic autonomy for LGBTQI refugees suffering under these conditions.

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About The Refugee Coalition of East Africa

The Refugee Coalition of East Africa ([RefCEA](#)) is a community-based organization for and by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. RefCEA was established as a coalition to unite the various independent LGBTQI refugee organizations in East Africa under an umbrella organization in order to facilitate long-term planning, advocacy, and representation, and to provide fiscal management and fundraising support for its members. Additionally, RefCEA oversees research initiatives representing the LGBTQI refugee community and works toward improving conditions for refugees during the resettlement waiting period, a process that can take 3-5 years and has slowed down even further for LGBTQI persons.

RefCEA website (and informational video) www.RefugeeCoalition.com

(Interested LGBTQI refugee groups are encouraged to contact RefCEA via the website)

Facebook www.Facebook.com/RefCEA

Crowdfunding page www.GoFundMe.com/RefCEA

About All Out

All Out is a movement for love and equality. We are thousands of people of all sexual orientations and identities from across the planet, turning solidarity into action. We work to build a world in which nobody has to sacrifice their family or freedom, safety or dignity because of who they are or who they love. All Out uses the power of digital technology to fuel LGBT+ activism across the world. Through respectful partnerships, we connect millions of ordinary citizens so that they can take action on, or donate to, campaigns for LGBT+ rights. Through collaboration, we raise the volume of local, national, regional and international campaigns. We do this work because we want to help create a world of true equality, get a fair deal for LGBT+ people everywhere and end bigotry and discrimination.

www.allout.org