



## Guidance

### INCLUSIVE TRAVEL TIPS

International Travel Tips for Women, LGBT+ and Staff with Disabilities

*Global Safety and Security*

# Inclusive Travel Tips

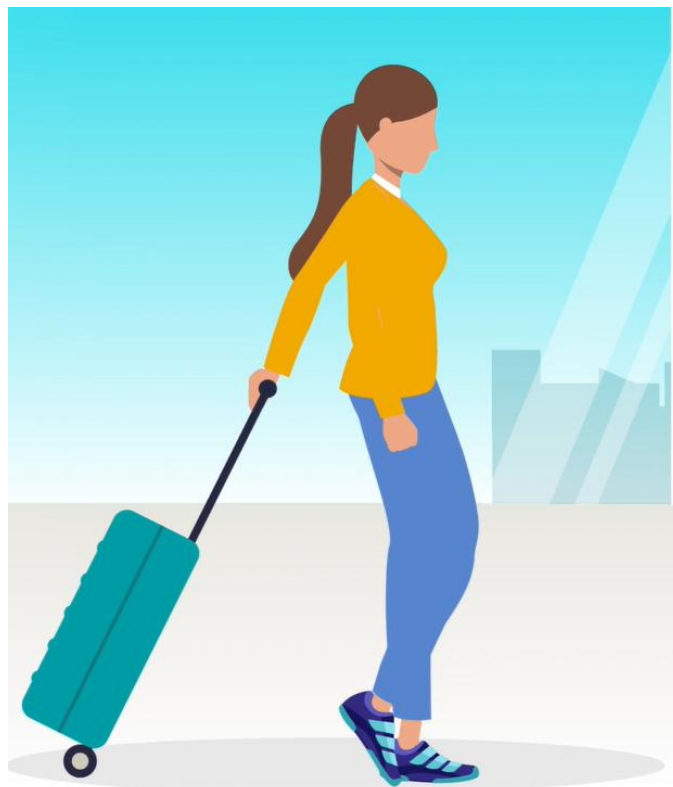
## Introduction

In this **travel guidance** you will find recommendations and suggestions for staff traveling to countries where Save the Children is based.

The focus is on **women, LGBT+, staff with disabilities** and special conditions.

Internal and external studies and surveys<sup>i</sup> show that international travels are particularly critical for the safety of staff with specific **individual characteristics**.

In line with our **duty of care for all staff**, we aim at raising personal **awareness** on risks and challenges connected to personal characteristics during international travels. We also suggest **mitigation measures** to reduce the likelihood of incidents and to make your travels more comfortable.



Have a good read... and a safe travel!

### Notes:

- This guidance is part of a wider project on Inclusive Travel Management. In particular, this guidance accompanies a video, realized by the Global Safety and Security Team with the participation of SCI Diversity and Inclusion Council and the Director of the Global Interagency Security Forum. **Video:** <https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/How/security/Pages/Gender-and-Diversity-Safety-and-Security.aspx>
- The recommendations present in this guidance do not replace in any way the **mandatory requirements** for traveling to Save the Children countries, such as the Personal Safety and Security (PSS) e-course, the Pre-departure Information, the face-to-face security briefing at arrival in country and any other course mandatory for specific countries (e.g. HEAT, kidnapping and hostage survival e-course).
- Several recommendations in the section dedicated to women are **applicable to all staff**. Nevertheless, according to several studies, women are more exposed than men during international travels, especially at airports and while staying in hotels.
- This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of recommendations, but just a guidance with top tips aimed at raising awareness and helping in better reflecting on ourselves.

**Staff interested in enriching this journey** with additional tips or anecdotes are welcome to contact [simona.mortolini@savethechildren.org](mailto:simona.mortolini@savethechildren.org)

# Inclusive Travel Tips

## Travel Tips for Women

### PREPARING AND PACKING

- **Make yourself aware** of legal and cultural gender norms in the country you are visiting, including (but not limited to) dress codes, body language and greetings, public displacement of affection, relationship dynamics, etc...
- Before packing, read the **PDI** (Pre-departure information) of the country of destination. It contains a section on attire/clothing, one on culture and customs and one on context-specific gender threats and challenges.
- **Three things to take with you:**
  1. A fake wedding ring, which may help to avoid unwanted attention in some countries.
  2. A doorstopper, a personal mini alarm.
  3. Sanitary pads and sufficient medicines for your specific needs.
- Do not put your entire valuables in the same **handbag**: passport, cards/money, mobile and even the key of your house. In case someone steals it, you may lose all your means of communication, payment and identification.
- **Pack light**, with the help of a pre-written packing list, and use **comfortable shoes**. Your ability to move quickly will reduce the risk of you becoming a victim.
- When your luggage is ready, lock it and put on the **label** your telephone number and the address of destination. Do not put your home address as this advertises burglars that your house might be empty.

### FLIGHT AND ARRIVAL AT DESTINATION

- Pay special attention to the PDI section “**airport arrival and transportation**”. If in doubt, send a request of clarification to the CO Focal Point (contacts are indicated in the PDI).
- If the CO has organized the **pick-up** at the airport, do wait for it. The driver has to be identifiable either by carrying our logo or by signs agreed with the CO, such as personal name, transport company name, etc.
- Ensure you have sufficient **credit** on your mobile phone, assuming it does work in the country of

destination. If your mobile is not working at destination and you need to make a call, look for the possibility to do it inside the airport facilities. Alternatively, ask support to a recognizable staff member of our or other INGOs.

- “*I will arrive over the weekend. Are there **restaurants or supermarkets near my accommodation** that can be safely reached by women?*” If you believe that you are missing important information for your safety at arrival, **ask the CO** contact ahead of your travel. Be a proactive traveler!

### HOTEL CHECK-IN

- **Avoid rooms on the ground floor** which are more accessible and where you could be viewed through the windows.
- Avoid rooms in **deserted parts of the hotel**, such as at the end of long corridors or in annexes.
- Ask for an **alternative room** if your room number is announced verbally. Remember, a hotel lobby is a public area!
- Female solo travelers could request **two keys** to avoid signaling that they are traveling alone.
- Do not feel embarrassed or guilty at making safety specific requests or changes: **Politeness should always come secondary** to your own personal safety!

### BEFORE UNPACKING: Basic Room Check

- Check that all **door locks** work and that all access points (including balcony doors, windows and adjoining doors) are secure. If not, ask the hotel to change your room.
- Verify that the **telephone works**.
- Put all **essential** items in one safe place, so you have your **grab bag** ready to go in case of evacuation.

### USEFUL SAFETY DEVICES

- Doors should have **double locks**. Anyway, bring in your luggage a doorstopper to increase your safety. Some are also alarmed to alert you, if the door opens unexpectedly.
- Have a **torch / flashlight** with you to light the way in case of a power outage.
- **Padlocks** for locking items in your luggage as backup are useful should you feel your safe box is not sufficiently secure or you need additional security for your belongings.

# Inclusive Travel Tips

## STAY AT THE HOTEL

- Collect any items you need from **reception** rather than having them brought to your room.
- Keep your hotel **door locked at all times**.
- Check the **spy-hole** before opening the door to anyone.
- If in doubt about the identity of someone knocking on your door, **ring the front desk**.
- If asked to provide **credit card** details over the room phone, go to reception and do the transaction in person.
- When possible, do not leave your **room key** at the reception.
- If you lose your room key, ask for a new one and ensure the lost one is **deactivated**.
- If working in a hotel public area, be **vigilant** about who may be able to hear and/or view your work.
- Whether you are out and about, or moving around inside the hotel, think carefully about what **information** you are disclosing in public. Be aware that criminals congregate in hotel lobbies/meeting areas.
- Be aware that, in certain countries, some hotels do not permit **unmarried couples** to share a room and may ask for a marriage certificate or even report you to the local authorities.
- Imagine this scenario. A female staff member receives the following requests while staying at a hotel: "May I store my bag in your room?" "May I use your bathroom?" "May I charge my phone in your room?" **There is no reason to say yes to any of these requests**, including if coming from a colleague. Complacency could be the biggest enemy of your safety!

## MEETINGS

- If you decide to do your preparation whilst in a public area, such as a hotel or café, be mindful of where you are sitting when reading and using your **electronic devices**. Try to sit with your back against the wall or similar and keep your paperwork close by and not on show.
- If possible, propose the **venue** in a location that you already know. Never agree to have meetings in your hotel or guesthouse room.
- Have safe conversations and use discretion: think about what you are saying in public and who might be listening; how much **information** are you sharing; avoid unwittingly divulging personal information.

- Let other colleagues know who you are going to meet and have an **exit strategy** planned ahead, in case you feel uncomfortable at the meeting.

## DOWN TIME and LEISURE TIME

- Whether it is lunch during a meeting or a networking event, be mindful of what you are eating and drinking. In particular, consider if there may be a risk of **drink (or food) spiking**<sup>ii</sup>. Keep an eye on your drink, even during its preparation.
- Remember that drinking alcohol is not allowed in every country. Additionally, as well as knowing your limits for drinking alcohol, be aware that **locally produced spirits** can often be much stronger than branded spirits. Stick with what you know.
- Keep your **exercise routine**, but do it safely. For example if you are engaging in outdoor activities, such as running, do not wear **earphones**, which could interfere with your situational awareness. Keep vigilant and aware of your surroundings.

## RELATIONS

- Attitudes towards women vary within countries, especially in terms of relations. Something as simple as a **meeting for coffee** may be totally misconstrued in a different culture.
- Remember that there may be consequences of public **displays of affection** in some countries or cultures.
- Please do consider the law on **sexual relationships outside of marriage** in the country you are traveling to.
- Some hotels will not permit **unmarried couples** to share a bedroom and may ask for a marriage certificate or even report you to the authorities.
- Be aware of how the authorities view **sexual assaults**: in some countries, you are advised not to report such incidents to local authorities due to their laws on sex outside of marriage, which could result in the victim being prosecuted.

## PREGNANT WOMEN

Pregnant women are recommended not to travel in countries with **Zika risk**, which can cause serious birth defects. A world map on Zika is consultable on the website of the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**<sup>iii</sup>. Pregnant women should anyway seek specific medical advice before travel, including for verifying if the necessary vaccinations pose a risk to themselves and/or to the unborn baby.



# Inclusive Travel Tips

## LGBT+ Staff

Attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people vary significantly around the world. In some countries, homosexuality is punishable by death, many countries continue to criminalize same-sex relationships and a high number of them have laws restricting freedom of expression on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Some countries may recognize some LGBT+ rights, however, this does not guarantee cultural acceptance, with an additional layer of complexity related to internal variations (e.g. urban versus rural areas). LGBT+ people may be subjected to hate crimes, which are known to be under-reported.

### PREPARING FOR YOUR TRAVEL

- **Be informed:** All Pre-departure Information (PDIs) have a section dedicated to LGBT+ staff and visitors. We also suggest you to look for additional info. For example, check the website of the **International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association**<sup>iv</sup>, which provides updated maps with detailed information about LGBT+ rights across the world and highlights potentially dangerous regions and countries.
- **Update your passport:** Transgender, gender diverse and gender-fluid travelers may encounter issues with passports, which can lead to difficulties with authorities. Please consult the government's policy on passport identity for transgender and gender minority travelers. It may also be worth contacting the embassy or consulate nearest to your destination. They should be able to provide more information to assist you.
- **Medications:** assist in gender transformations may be illegal in countries where homosexuality is illegal. Verify it before traveling; even when it is not illegal, bring a doctor's note to keep with you.
- **Luggage:** Do not use contrasting luggage that shows you are part of or support the LGBT+ community (e.g. rainbow strap) and put in your luggage clothes that will help to blend in if visiting some countries.

### SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS

- Consider reviewing your **social media profile** before traveling. In some countries, police and security forces may check your electronic devices, mobile phones and laptops at the arrival at the airport. These are forms of “**electronic surveillance**”, which can pose a risk to your

personal safety. Therefore, we recommend you to remove any content and pictures that are not appropriate to the local context from all your devices.

- Also, note that in some countries right-wing groups have carried out **entrapment campaigns and events** in order to arrest or extort gender and sexual diversity foreigners using social media.
- In general, be aware of what you post on social media and any apps you may be using. They **can be used to investigate against you**.

### WHEN IN COUNTRY

The following steps can be taken to minimize the likelihood of encountering cultural, social, legal, or physical consequences arising from your SOGIE (sexual orientation gender identity and expression):

- **Follow the law:** Travelers should comply with local laws. Please also note that due to a lack of specific laws regarding same-sex, trans and intersex people in many legal systems, there may be arbitrary punishments or inconsistent enforcement.
- **Keep a low profile:** In risk locations, LGBT+ travelers should avoid drawing attention to themselves through public displays of affection or expressing opinions on LGBT+ issues in public.
- **Be vigilant:** LGBT+ travelers should exercise higher levels of vigilance in areas with a higher likelihood of physical assault. They should remain alert to their surroundings and check for signs of being followed.
- **If you receive unusual attention or remarks** stay calm and ignore them. You should leave the area and go back to your hotel or office, making sure to do it in a safe way. Remember that in some countries, reporting hostility, harassment, or assault to local authorities, could result in you being prosecuted. If you are from a country that recognizes LGBT+ rights, you can instead contact your National Embassy or Consulate.

#### **Dating apps – recommendation for all staff:**

When visiting or deploying to Save the Children offices, you are strongly recommended to avoid the use of dating apps due to:

- risks connected to your individual safety and/or the safety of other staff;
- risks of breaching SCI's code of conduct and/or safeguarding policies (e.g. by being unable to verify the age of another individual or whether they belong to a vulnerable community with whom SCI works);
- risks to the organisation and its programs.

# Inclusive Travel Tips

## Staff with Disabilities and Special Conditions

Staff with disabilities may face challenges related to **bureaucracy** for international travels, **lack of facilities** in the countries they are going to and **different cultural norms, values and attitudes** that may lead to unwanted attention, discrimination and other risks. The impact on staff health and wellbeing is both physical and mental.

**Preparation is key** to mitigate challenges and threats and to reduce the likelihood of incidents.

- **Communicate clearly.** If you have a disability, ask SCI Travel Manager to support looking for the most suitable flight and accommodation, clearly explaining what assistance you require. SCI Travel Manager will ask your explicit consent to use your personal data with the sole purpose of organizing your transport and accommodation.
- **Flight.** Specify what your needs are during all parts of the journey, including at departure, while onboard, at stopovers and during transfer journeys. Note that wheelchairs are not allowed on flights. They will be stored in the hull. This means you will require assistance to get on and off the plane and throughout the entire trip. Get in touch in advance with SC office in the country of destination asking for assistance at arrival.
- **Equipment.** Be aware that some airlines have specific policies for traveling with equipment you may need (e.g. wheelchairs, respiratory machines); some will not take certain types of batteries, others will not allow oxygen cylinders on board. There may be packing procedures to follow, you may be asked about the make and type of your equipment. Plan ahead to allow sufficient time to complete potential forms and questionnaires.
- **Medical clearance.** Most people with disabilities do not need to get medical clearance before traveling. However, some airlines may ask for evidence of fitness to travel. It is a good idea to carry a 'traveling letter', with a description of your disability and details of any difficulties that could occur and what assistance you might need.
- **Medications.** It is vital that you check with the airline provider - if you wish, with the support of SCI Travel Manager - what documentation you should take with you to prove the need to carry medication and in what receptacles the medicines should be carried. It may be essential to have a letter from your doctor stating your need for medication in particularly if you are going to a country with strict drug controls. The medication you take may contain ingredients, which are illegal in some countries. To find out more about any restrictions check with the nearest Embassy or High Commission of the country you are visiting.
- **Medical advice.** Seek medical advice before travel, including asking your doctor if your disability or impairment makes you vulnerable to circulation problems during flights. Travelers with breathing difficulties should check whether additional precautions may be required, e.g. pressurized canisters attached to breathing apparatus may be affected by pressure changes during the flight.
- **Animal welfare:** If you are traveling with an assistance dog, you must make sure that the dog has been microchipped, processed and immunized against rabies.
- **Travel insurance:** Make sure your travel insurance policy covers any pre-existing medical conditions and any expensive equipment you may be taking.
- **Hotel/accommodation booking.** Please clarify your needs, such as wheelchair access, accessible lift, charging facilities for electrical equipment, rooms at ground floor or near to a lift, wheelchair-accessible doors, roll-in shower or grab-bars, etc. (the list is not exhaustive of all potential needs).
- **Be informed on local attitudes.** Attitudes towards people with disabilities can vary greatly across the globe. Take some time to do research and familiarize yourself with local attitudes. It is important to mentally prepare yourself prior to travel. Ask support to the CO.
- **Be aware of the weather conditions.** Temperature and climate can take an extra toll if you have a skin condition, albinism, a wheelchair or other special conditions. Read the PDI and ask the CO for additional information if needed.
- **Verify accessibility and limitations in country.** Before arranging a journey, the CO will support you in verifying accessibility of SC facilities.
- Several countries and territories around the world have **HIV entry restrictions** especially for work permits. For further information, visit the **UNAIDS<sup>y</sup>** website and the **Global Database on HIV Travel<sup>vi</sup>**.

# Inclusive Travel Tips

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For more information on Diversity and Inclusion in Safety and Security, including for travels:

[simona.mortolini@savethechildren.org](mailto:simona.mortolini@savethechildren.org), Global Gender and Diversity Safety and Security Manager, GSS

For support in flights and accommodation booking:

[george.tamamdjiev@savethechildren.org](mailto:george.tamamdjiev@savethechildren.org), Global Travel Manager, GSS

For general information on travels, visit:

<https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/How/security/Pages/TravelerSafetyandSecurity.aspx>

For information on Gender and Diversity Safety and Security, including internal and external studies, surveys and tools on Inclusive Safety and Security, visit:

<https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/How/security/Pages/Gender-and-Diversity-Safety-and-Security.aspx>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/How/security/Pages/Gender-and-Diversity-Safety-and-Security.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://wikihow.com/Avoid-Spiked-Drinks>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/zika>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://ilga.org>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.unaids.org/en/site-search/#?cludoquery=travel%20restrictions>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.hivtravel.org>