



Parliamentarians for Global Action
Parlamentarios para la Acción Global
Action Mondiale des Parlementaires
برلمانيون من أجل التحرك العالمي



ADVANCING THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND INCLUSION OF LGBTI PEOPLE

A HANDBOOK FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS



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UNDP works in 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty and inequality while protecting the planet. UNDP's work supports countries around the world to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a human-rights-based approach to programme design and implementation focused on leaving no-one behind. Since 2007 UNDP has worked in more than 100 countries to ensure the express inclusion of LGBTI+ people in partnerships for sustainable human development. UNDP's Bureau of Policy and Programme Support funded the publication of this Handbook, and UNDP acknowledges with gratitude the longstanding partnerships with donors, in this case particularly the Government of Sweden, that enable its work.

PGA, a non-governmental, multi-party, international network of legislators acting in their individual capacity, informs and mobilizes parliamentarians in all regions of the world to advocate for human rights and the Rule of Law, democracy, human security, inclusion, gender equality and justice, including climate justice. Since 2013, PGA's global parliamentary Campaign against Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI Campaign) has sensitized parliamentarians from all regions of the world, facilitated meaningful interactions between parliamentarians and representatives of the LGBTI community, and contributed to efforts to advance inclusive legislative reforms in Angola, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles and Uruguay. PGA gratefully acknowledges the support of the Arcus Foundation, Global Equality Fund, Open Society Foundations, Sigrid Rausing Trust, and Oak Foundation.

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Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is an international, cross-party, non-governmental network of parliamentarians that informs and mobilizes legislators to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, democracy, human security, non-discrimination and gender equality.

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FOREWORD

On behalf of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Dear friends and colleagues,

In 2016, when I was a Senator for the Opposition party in Belize, I was invited to participate in a [Seminar on Equality and Non-Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\)](#) in Montevideo, Uruguay, held at the sidelines of the inception meeting of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC). The Seminar was convened by the Parliament of Uruguay and [Parliamentarians for Global Action \(PGA\)](#), a network of 1,200 legislators in 132 countries around the world that informs and mobilizes parliamentary members to advocate for human rights and the rule of law, human security, peace, inclusion and gender equality.

At the Seminar, I witnessed what, at the time, I thought was almost impossible: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) activists, and parliamentarians, in the same room, exchanging views and experiences, and engaging in open and productive discussions with the aim of solving common challenges. I also experienced the powerful and transformative effects of these interactions: hearing personal stories and experiences is key to helping members of parliament understand the challenges faced by LGBTI people and the urgency to act.

Since the inception in 2013 of our [Global Parliamentary Campaign against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI Campaign\)](#), PGA has positioned itself as the parliamentary partner of LGBTI civil society organizations around the world, facilitating collaboration and encouraging its member parliamentarians to support/champion LGBTI-affirming legislative reforms, including decriminalization of consensual same-sex activity, in Angola, Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, El Salvador, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles and Uruguay.

I was eager to join PGA's global network of legislators committed to human rights, which gave me the assurance that I had peers around the world addressing similar issues and there was a network in place ready to support me and other like-minded colleagues.

At the meeting in Montevideo, PGA and UNDP presented the concept for the publication "Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: A Handbook for Parliamentarians" and took the opportunity to collect insights and reactions from participating MPs and civil society representatives. (The Handbook, published in 2017, is available in nine languages and has been downloaded 9,000 times in English and 19,000 times in Spanish. Our LGBTI Inclusion site housing the Handbook has attracted 79,000 unique visits accounting for 24 percent of all visits to PGA's website).

Five years after this truly eye-opening experience, I am delighted to co-introduce the Handbook's new, updated edition and to share how it encouraged me to take concrete actions to promote the rights of all individuals, including LGBTI people, in my country and globally.

Through PGA, I have connected with parliamentarians in the Caribbean and all around the world and seized on meaningful and regular interactions with human rights experts and civil society representatives in my country, Belize, and across the region and globally, who have shared their testimonies and stories, inspiring parliamentary action for the protection of human rights. I have shared the Handbook with colleagues to improve understanding of key issues and bridge difficult conversations aimed at finding common ground. I am honoured to be considered an ally of the LGBTI community and a spokesperson for their rights and inclusion. And to think it all started at that first PGA discussion in Montevideo!

Changing laws and changing minds takes time and does not occur in a vacuum. I very much hope this Handbook is helpful in prompting you to take that first step towards fully and effectively guaranteeing rights for LGBTI people.

Hon. Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Belize and PGA Board Member, Belmopan, February 2022

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Leave no one behind.

These four simple words reflect one of the most powerful commitments that countries around the world have ever made. They appear in the 2030 Declaration for Sustainable Development, adopted unanimously by world leaders in September 2015. Above all, these words are a commitment to marginalized and excluded people: that they too will be able to enjoy their full human rights and benefit from common prosperity. They are also a recognition that everyone must be empowered and supported to reach their full potential. Only by leaving no one behind can we all – individuals, families, communities, and countries – thrive.

Who is marginalized and excluded? Who, therefore, must be prioritized in the effort to achieve sustainable human development through a human-rights-based approach? The answer varies from place to place, but two of the most pervasive forms of discrimination and exclusion around the world take place against girls and women, and against LGBTI people. The struggles for gender equality and for the inclusion of LGBTI people are inextricably linked. We all must be included in human development, regardless of our gender, our gender identity or expression, our sexual orientation or our biological sex characteristics.

The evidence collated in this Handbook shows that the conditions for respecting LGBTI human rights and inclusion do not come about by happenstance. They flourish when we have strong parliamentary leaders who are committed to leaving no one they represent behind.

We have not yet achieved equality for LGBTI people in any country, but progress toward this goal has been remarkable in recent decades. **Just imagine if a critical mass of parliamentarians around the globe were to now commit to taking concrete action to advance the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI people. The impact on legal, policy and social norm changes in every corner of the globe would be profound.**

UNDP remains committed to supporting MPs around the world to accelerate this positive momentum.

To leave no one behind.

Haoliang Xu and Ulrika Modéer

Respectively, Assistant Secretaries-General of the United Nations and Directors of the UNDP Bureaux for Policy and Programme Support and External Relations and Advocacy, New York, November 2022





INTRODUCTION ... AND A CALL FOR ACTION

Inclusive societies promise more sustainable human development outcomes. This is because every member of such societies understands that they have a contribution to make, their contribution is valued, and no one should be left behind. Inclusiveness is thus a key precondition for building and sustaining peace, harmony and societal cohesion.

Yet LGBTI people in every country and development context have been denied societal inclusion and respect for their human rights. Increasingly, MPs all over the world are taking action to remedy the effects of this denial. But many who have done so face hostile, organised and highly emotional reactions from those who do not support LGBTI inclusion.

The challenges facing LGBTI people around the world – and their allies working to promote respect for their human rights and inclusion – remain formidable. Violence, abuse and stigma in many cases remain institutionalized in the laws and policies of nations. Reprisals against LGBTI people form an early warning of – and a predictable accompaniment to – the rise of authoritarianism.

At the same time, however, the courage and leadership of elected officials has accelerated progress worldwide:

- The parliaments of **Bhutan, Gabon and Angola** all decriminalized same-sex activity in the past two years
- **30 Member States of the UN** now provide for marriage equality. The parliaments of **Australia, Germany, Malta, Finland, Switzerland**, and **Chile** have all passed the necessary legislation over the past 4 years.
- More and more Member States of the UN are legislating to **ban the harmful practice of so-called 'conversion therapy'**, thus protecting children from this insidious form of child abuse.

As Valerie Woods mentions in her foreword on behalf of PGA, this Handbook substantially rewrites and updates a first edition produced by UNDP and PGA in 2017. Contributors include experts on parliamentary procedure, governance, health and inclusion, and of course many parliamentarians themselves. Its content demonstrates the unique power and authority of parliament and parliamentarians – especially when working in close alliance with LGBTI civil society organizations (CSOs) – to promote inclusion and respect for the rights of LGBTI people.

The Handbook sets out practical advice as to how you, as an MP, can:

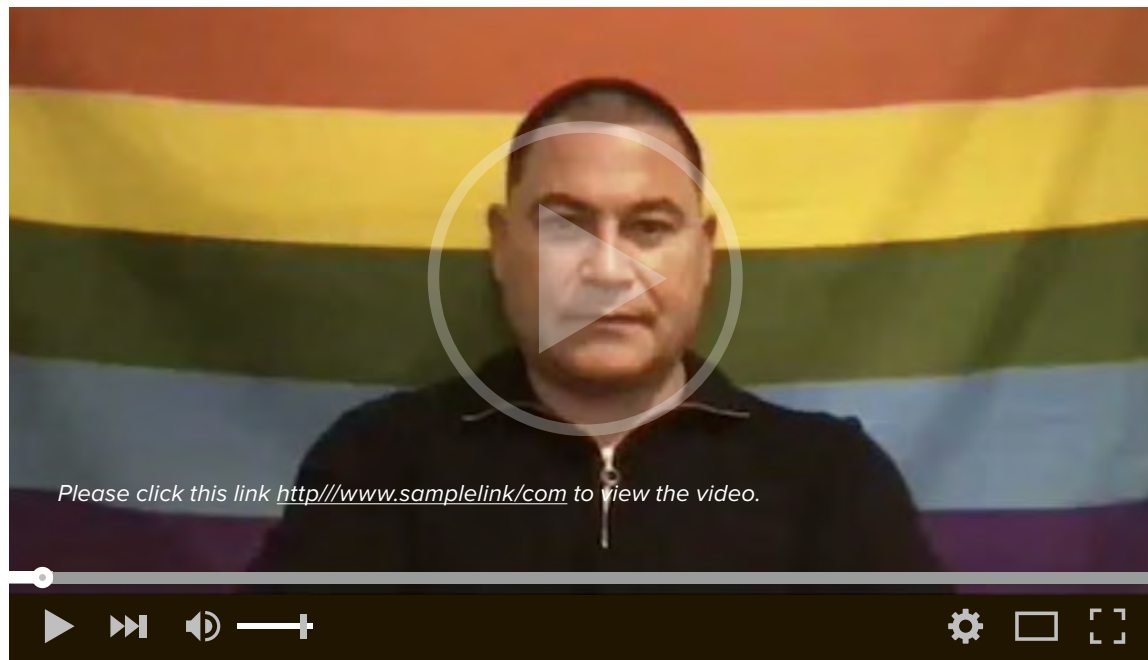
- make use of the global and regional human rights frameworks that oblige your government to ensure the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI people;
- find the entry points that will enable you to act, in whatever your national context, to promote LGBTI rights and inclusion;
- use your multiple roles – legislative, representative and oversight – to protect LGBTI human rights and inclusion and hold your government to account on its obligations to do so;
- work with communities and allies across political divides to frame laws, shape legal and policy frameworks and lead political campaigns for the human rights of your LGBTI constituents;
- apply lessons learned from successful actions taken by your fellow MPs across the globe to help you to step up and speak out effectively in your own country.

Positive and inclusive change takes place every day around the world through effective and inclusive parliamentary action. As an MP, you can make real change to the quality of life, dignity, respect and rights of your LGBTI constituents and compatriots. You can support, form or lead coalitions to effect real change – sometimes quite rapid change – to protect and ensure human rights and inclusion for LGBTI people.



Haloiang Xu and Ulrika Modéer, in their joint foreword on behalf of UNDP, remind you that you are not alone in this work. In this Handbook you will find suggestions, examples and evidence to help you act effectively to promote inclusion in your own country context. UNDP and PGA – and the increasing number of networks of and for MPs around the world that now exist to bring this urgent human rights imperative to fruition – can support you in practical ways. In particular, we can help you engage a former or serving parliamentarian or other context-appropriate expert to facilitate a workshop for your fellow MPs, media and civil society on how to build the alliances and make the arguments required to make positive change happen.

Finally, never forget the unique authority that your position as a parliamentarian confers on you to promote inclusion and respect for the human rights and dignity of LGBTI people. And never forget that help is always at hand for you to help ensure that LGBTI rights are recognized and honoured around the world for what they are: human rights.



Source: Charles Chauvel, *Global Lead Inclusive Processes and Institutions*, UNDP; address to Interparliamentary Plenary Assembly, Copenhagen 2021 Human Rights Forum, August 2021



In many places, LGBTQIA+ people still face stigma, violence and discrimination and are not able to reach their full potential. There is a lot to do in our parliaments, on our streets and in our minds.

However, I want to highlight the hope and all the positive change we have seen so far. This change has been possible because of so many people supporting each other, working together to change laws or raising awareness in our streets. Activists and parliamentarians, academics and allies, each of us can play a role to make this change happen, especially if we join forces.

To those who hold the power to make fundamental change: this is the time to do it. As a former parliamentarian, I would like to call on you, parliamentarians, to use your power to change our society for the better.

We are mostly limited by the borders that other people have put on us, and that we have made our own. To bring those down takes a lot of courage. It all begins with being true to yourself. Be true to yourself and the rest will follow.”

– Petra de Sutter, Federal Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium and former Member of the European Parliament.

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

Terms, contexts, legal systems, and discourse vary considerably from one place to another but this Handbook is designed to be of practical benefit to MPs and their allies, wherever they are in the world.

Please treat this Handbook as a base resource – adapt it to your own needs and context to build your own toolkit to foster the inclusion and protect the human rights of LGBTI people.

You are not alone. UNDP and PGA – and other organizations working for LGBTI inclusion – can assist you if you need to clarify anything in the Handbook, want to follow up on the guidance it offers or require support to implement what it recommends.

THIS HANDBOOK IS ORGANISED ON A MODULAR BASIS. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO READ IT ALL. USE THE PART OR PARTS THAT ARE MOST RELEVANT TO YOU. THE PARTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Part I:** **Overview** introduces the current situation of LGBTI people around the world and explains why it is important that MPs take urgent action to protect their human rights.
- Part II:** **LGBTI Rights are Human Rights** provides a knowledge base on the global and regional legal and rights frameworks most relevant to LGBTI people, and their key recommendations relevant to LGBTI human rights; it explains how you can work with United Nations treaty bodies and other international and regional instruments and resources to protect and defend LGBTI human rights.
- Part III:** **Effective Action** identifies key entry points, based on global rights frameworks, for action to protect LGBTI human rights, and the most important lessons learned from progressive actions taken by MPs and parliaments around the world, including many examples of successful strategies towards reform.
- Part IV:** **Further Guidance** provides sensitive and practical guidance on speaking about LGBTI people and their rights, including how to adapt to specific local contexts and conditions, along with practical advocacy tools and model questions to ask of government, parliament, other decision-makers and policy makers, for use in your oversight role as an MP.

KEY TERMINOLOGY

LGBTI: This Handbook uses the convenient acronym LGBTI inclusively, i.e. inclusive of all people of diverse sexualities, gender identities and sex characteristics. In doing so, we acknowledge the limitations of the term, especially in covering and honouring the complexity of the populations the term encompasses, and context-specific particularities or languages (see section 1.1, “Who are LGBTI people?”).

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (MP): The Handbook is for the use of any person elected to a legislature in any governmental system. Again for convenience, we mainly use the term “Member of Parliament (MP)”. Although we acknowledge that this term is particular to systems of government derived from the Westminster model, it is used in its broadest sense.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSO civil society organization	EU European Union	HIV human immuno-deficiency virus	ILGA International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
ILO International Labour Organization	LGBTI lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex	MP member of parliament	MSM men who have sex with men
NGO non-governmental organization	OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	PGA Parliamentarians for Global Action	SDGs Sustainable Development Goals
SOGIESC sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics	SRHR sexual and reproductive health and rights	UN United Nations	UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund	UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UPR Universal Periodic Review	WHO World Health Organization

GLOSSARY

This list includes terms used in this Handbook as well as other, related terms, that are not. It is not an exhaustive list of terms relevant to the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI people.

Note also that the terms listed here are in constant evolution. Their use and the meaning attached to them varies from one place to another. To use terms such as these in a way that is appropriate to a particular context and/or culture, see section 8, “Speaking about LGBTI human rights and inclusion”.

The definitions in this list are drawn (and sometimes expanded) from existing definitions in international texts such as the Yogyakarta Principles, or written by international organizations (UNESCO) or LGBTI organizations (ILGA, RFSL, TRANSIT, MSMIT, OII Australia, OII-Europe, NELFA).

A

Aromantic: Someone who does not experience romantic attraction to anyone.

Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction towards anyone.

B

Biphobia: The fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance or/and hatred toward bisexuality and bisexual people. The phobia may exist among heterosexuals, gay men, lesbians or bisexuals themselves and is often related to multiple negative stereotypes of bisexuals centered on a belief that bisexuality does not exist and on the generalization that bisexuals are promiscuous.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one sex.

C

Cisgender: A term referring to persons whose gender identity and gender expression match the sex they were assigned at birth and the social expectations related to their gender.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE): A curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.⁹⁶

Conversion therapy: An umbrella expression to refer to any sustained effort to modify a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Other terms include: “reparative therapy”, “gay cure”, “ex-gay therapy”, “gender critical therapy” and Sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression change efforts (SOGIECE) (ILGA). Conversion therapy is banned in several countries and has been defined as torture by several national and international instances, such as the UN expert on SOGI.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ UNESCO, *Why Comprehensive sexuality education is important*, 2018.

⁹⁷ OHCHR, *‘Conversion therapy’ can amount to torture and should be banned says UN expert*, 2020.

E

Endosex (or dyadic): A person who was born with sex characteristics that fit typical gender-binary notions of or social expectations for male or female bodies (e.g. non-intersex). An endosex person may identify with any gender identity and any sexual orientation.

G

Gay: Usually used to refer to a person who identifies as a man and who is emotionally, affectionally and/or sexually attracted to men, even though women attracted by women may define themselves as gay.

Gender: Refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context and time specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.⁹⁸

Gender-based violence: An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.⁹⁹

Gender binary: A classification system consisting of two opposites: men or women, male or female, feminine or masculine.

Gender expression: The way a person communicates their gender identity externally through their appearance, e.g. clothing, hair style, use of cosmetics, mannerisms, way of speaking and demeanour and how these presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.

Gender identity: A person's internal, deeply felt sense of their gender or a combination of genders. A person's gender identity may or may not correspond with her or his sex assigned at birth and their sex characteristics.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ UN Women, *Concepts and Definitions*.

⁹⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Introduction to the Yogyakarta Principles.

H

Heterosexism: Refers to the imposition of heterosexuality as the only normal and acceptable expression of sexuality, resulting in prejudice or discrimination against people who are not heterosexual or who are perceived to not be heterosexual.

Heterosexual: Refers to a person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of a different gender (sometimes referred to as "straight").

Homophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against persons known or assumed to be homosexual, or against homosexual behaviour or cultures.

Homosexual: A sexual orientation classification based on the gender of the individual and the gender of her or his sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, the person is categorized as homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbians and gay men instead of homosexuals. The terms lesbian and gay are considered neutral and positive, with a focus on the person's identity rather than their sexuality. Lastly, the term homosexual has, for many, a historical connotation of pathology.

I

Intersectionality: The interaction of different axes of identity, such as gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, race, ability and socio-economic status, in multiple and intersecting ways, resulting in different forms of oppression affecting a person in interrelated ways.¹⁰¹

Intersex: Intersex people are born with physical or biological sex characteristics, such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns, that do not fit the typical definitions or social expectations for male or female bodies. These characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty.¹⁰²

Intersexphobia or interphobia: A range of negative attitudes (e.g. emotional disgust, fear, violence, anger, or discomfort) felt or expressed towards people whose sex characteristics do not conform with society's expectations of how the sex characteristics of a person, understood only as male or female, should look.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Adapted from Psychological Society of South Africa, *Practice Guidelines for Psychology Professionals Working with Sexually and Gender-Diverse People*, 17 April 2018.

¹⁰² UN Free and Equal, *Fact Sheet: Intersex*.

¹⁰³ Dan Christian Ghattas, *Protecting Intersex People in Europe: A Toolkit for Law and Policymakers* (ILGA Europe and OII-Europe, 2019).

K

Key populations: Key populations, or key populations at higher risk of HIV, are groups of people who are more likely to be exposed to HIV or to transmit it and whose engagement is critical to a successful HIV response. In all countries, key populations include people living with HIV. In most settings men who have sex with men, transgender people, people who inject drugs and sex workers and their clients are at higher risk of exposure to HIV than other groups.¹⁰⁴ However, each country should define the specific populations that are key to their epidemic and response based on the epidemiological and social context.

L

Legal gender recognition: Laws, policies or administrative procedures and processes which set out how trans and gender-diverse people can change their sex/gender marker and names on official identity documents.¹⁰⁵

Lesbian: A person who identifies as a woman and who is emotionally, affectionally and/or sexually attracted to women.

Lesbophobia: An irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against persons known or assumed to be lesbian, or against lesbian behaviour or cultures.

LGBTI: This acronym derives from the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. So it encompasses several groups of individuals. LGBTI is the most commonly used term in the international human rights field. However, it has its origins in the Global North and therefore has its limitations. It groups individuals according to identity categories that are not universal: people identify themselves in a myriad of ways, or sometimes do not identify within just one given category. The term LGBTI may include, for example, people who are non-binary, gender fluid or pansexual, but also people such as *hijras* in India and Bangladesh, *mahu* in French Polynesia, *muxe* in Mexico or *two-spirit* in North America. Virtually every language has its own terms for sexual and gender minorities, and while these words may be negative or derogatory, they also demonstrate the universality of sex, and sexual and gender diversity.

What LGBTI people all have in common is that they are considered as defying the gender norms and expectations of society. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual people counter the gendered expectation that men and women have relationships only with people of their own sex and that people of the same gender cannot have relationships. Trans people counter the assumption that gender identity is always aligned with the sex assigned at birth. Non-binary people counter the assumption that gender identity must fall on one or the other side of the gender binary (male or female). Intersex people counter the expectation that biological sex characteristics can always be classified as male or female without ambiguity.

LGBTIphobia: An umbrella term that covers forms of fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against LGBTI people (or those perceived to be). It includes homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, transphobia and interphobia (also called intersexphobia).

¹⁰⁴ A/75/836.

¹⁰⁵ Lucas Ramón Mendos and others, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020: Global Legislation Overview Update* (Geneva, ILGA, December 2020).

M

Men who have sex with men (MSM): This refers to all men who engage in sexual and/or romantic relations with other men or who experience sexual attraction towards the same sex. As used in this publication, the term is inclusive both of a variety of patterns of sexual behaviour by males with members of the same sex and of diverse self-determined sexual identities and forms of sexual and social associations (“communities”). “Men who have sex with men” can include men who identify as gay or bisexual, transgender men who have sex with men and men who identify as heterosexual. Some men who have sex with men also form relationships with, or are married to, women. Some men sell sex to other men, regardless of their sexual identity. Some men who have sex with men do not associate themselves with any particular identity, community or terminology.

O

Out (verb): To reveal the covert sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics of someone. (noun): The fact of being open about one’s SOGIESC. Some LGBTI people “come out” or are out in some social circles and not others.

P

Pronouns: Pronouns are the way we refer to someone without using their name. A person’s pronouns are part of a person’s identity, just as a name is. It’s important that, like a person’s name, we take the time to learn a person’s pronouns rather than making assumptions about how to refer to them in conversation or writing. While it may be our habit to refer to everyone as “he” or “she” based on appearances, we recognize that gender is a spectrum and we can’t assume a person’s gender or a person’s pronouns based on appearances.¹⁰⁶

Pronouns differ from one language to another. In some languages, gender-neutral pronouns exist. In English, common gendered pronouns are “he” or “she”. Some people use the gender-neutral “they”.

¹⁰⁶ University of Northern Iowa, Gender & Sexuality Services, [Pronouns](#).



Queer: “Originally an offensive term used to degrade sexual and gender minorities, this term has intentionally been re-appropriated (taken back) and now refers to a political, sexual and/or gender identity that is intentionally and visibly different from the norm. ‘Queer’ is often used as a broad term for all people who are not strictly heterosexual or CIS gendered.”¹⁰⁷



Rainbow family: A family in which a child has (or several children have) at least one parent who identifies themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer.



Sex: The classification of a person as male or female. Sex is assigned at birth and written on a birth certificate, usually based on the appearance of the baby’s external anatomy and on a binary vision of sex which excludes intersex people. A person’s sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.¹⁰⁸ Most countries only allow to record “male” or “female” on an infant’s birth certificate (see also “sex binary”).

Sex binary: “A system of categorising all people into two sexes: male or female. It makes people who do not fit this binary invisible, oppressed or stigmatised, and gives power to people who uphold the sex binary. This is especially true for intersex and transsexual people whose experiences are not acknowledged or reflected in society, and who when discovered can be subject to harassment and violence.”¹⁰⁹

Sex characteristics: The characteristics that compose a person’s physio-anatomical sex, including genitals, gonads, hormones, internal organs and chromosome patterns. These characteristics may be apparent from conception or at birth, or emerge later in life, often at puberty.

Sexual and gender minorities: An umbrella term used to designate people who are part of a minority of the population and discriminated against because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

¹⁰⁷ Talia Meer, *All the (Tricky) Words: A Glossary of Terms on Sex, Gender and Violence* (Cape Town, GHJRU, University of Cape Town, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ ILGA-Europe, *Glossary beginning with s*.

¹⁰⁹ Talia Meer, *All the (Tricky) Words: A Glossary of Terms on Sex, Gender and Violence* (Cape Town: GHJRU, University of Cape Town, 2014).

Sexual orientation: Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.¹¹⁰

SOGIESC: This acronym derives from the terms sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. These are not specific to LGBTI people: everyone has them. A person can be oppressed because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics.

State-sponsored homophobia: The practice of criminalizing sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex.



Trans (or transgender): As used in this publication, transgender describes persons whose gender identity (their internal sense of their gender) is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans is an umbrella term that describes a wide variety of cross-gender behaviours and identities. It is not a diagnostic term and does not imply a medical or psychological condition. This term should be avoided as a noun: a person is not “a trans”; they may be a trans person. It is important to understand that not all people who are considered trans from an outsider’s perspective in fact identify as transgender, nor will they necessarily use this term to describe themselves. In many countries there are indigenous terms that describe similar cross-gender identities.

Trans people may have undergone or plan to undergo hormonal treatment or surgery, or they may not, may express their gender in very different ways (see “gender expression”) and may identify with one, multiple genders or no gender at all.

Transition: A series of steps a person may take to live in the gender they identify with. A person’s transition can be social and/or medical. Steps may include: coming out to family, friends and colleagues; dressing and acting according to one’s gender; changing one’s name and/or sex/gender on legal documents; medical treatments including hormone therapies and possibly one or more types of surgery.¹¹¹

Transphobia: Prejudice directed at transgender people because of their actual or perceived gender identity or expression. Transphobia can be structural, i.e. manifested in policies, laws and socioeconomic arrangements that discriminate against transgender people. It can also be societal, when transgender people are rejected or mistreated by others. Additionally, transphobia can be internalized when transgender people accept and reflect such prejudicial attitudes about themselves or other transgender people.

¹¹⁰ Introduction to the Yogyakarta Principles.

¹¹¹ ILGA-Europe, *Glossary beginning with T*.



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