



**PROJECT UGANDA**

Sharing Knowledge And Skills

**FACTSHEET on Sex,  
Sexuality and Gender:  
Challenging misconceptions  
and demystifying myths.**

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# FACT SHEET on Sex, Sexuality and Gender: Challenging misconceptions and demystifying myths.

This fact sheet seeks to share basic knowledge and perspectives on sex, sexuality and gender. It will define some of the common concepts and terminologies that have often been misunderstood and facilitate an understanding of the distinctions between sex gender and sexuality. It is hoped that it will serve as a useful tool for different stakeholders and practitioners

## A.Unpacking some basic concepts and terminologies:

- a. **Sex:** This refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex. The indicators of one's biological sex include sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.
- b. **Gender:** This refers to the social attributes, behaviors, feelings and roles a given culture or society associates with a person's biological sex (Man or woman).
- c. **Intersex-** is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia.

- d. **Sexuality** is the social construction of a biological habit or desire. An individual's sexuality is defined by whom one has sex with, in what ways, why, under what circumstances, and with what outcomes.
- e. **Sexual orientation**: Refers to the sex of the person to whom one has an enduring pattern of physical, sexual or romantic attraction. Sexual orientation falls on a spectrum from homosexual (gay/lesbian), bisexual to heterosexual.

## ❖ Categories of sexual orientation.

- i. **Heterosexual**: A Person who has a romantic or sexual attraction to a person of the opposite sex E.g. a man who is attracted to women OR a woman who is attracted to men. (often referred to as 'straight' )
- ii. **Homosexual**: A person who has a romantic or sexual attraction to persons of the same sex (often referred to as 'Gay')
- iii. **Bisexual**: A person who has a romantic or sexual attraction to both men and women.
- iv. **Lesbian**: A woman who has a romantic or sexual attraction to another woman.
- v. **Gay Man**: A man who has a romantic or sexual attraction to another man.
- vi. **Queer**: This is an umbrella term used to refer the persons who are attracted to others along a broad spectrum of sexual and gender identities.

- vii. **Asexual:** This refers to a person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire to any group of people. Asexuality is not the same as celibacy.
- viii. **Pan sexual:** This refers to a person who is not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender or gender identity.
- f. **Gender Identity:** *This refers* to a person's internal sense of self as either male, female, or transgender. A person's sex and gender identity may not always be in sync. A person may identify as male but they have the biological sex of a woman.

## ❖ Categories of Gender identity

- i. **Transgender:** This refers to a person who doesnot identify with their assigned gender at birth or the binary gender system. This includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, genderqueer. The following are categories of transgender persons.
  - a. **Transwoman/MTF** (male-to-female): A person, who is a biological man, assigned the male gender at birth, whose gender identity is female.
  - b. **Transman/FTM** (female-to-male): A person, who is a biological woman, assigned the female gender at birth, whose gender identity is male.
- ii. **Cisgender:** This refers to a person whose gender identity is consistent with the gender they were assigned at birth. E.g. A person who has male sexual organs and identifies as a man.

- iii. **Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity is different from their biological sex, who may undergo hormonal treatments and surgery to change their biological sex, to align it with their gender identity.
- iv. **Cross-dresser:** These are persons who wear clothing that is traditionally or stereotypically worn by another gender in their culture. Those who cross-dress are often comfortable with their assigned sex and do not wish to change it. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression.
- v. **Transvestite:** A medical term that was historically used to label cross dressing as a mental illness. This term is outdated, problematic, and generally considered offensive. A more inclusive and respectful term currently used is 'cross dresser'
- vi. **Drag:** This Refers to people who dress in a showy or flamboyant way that exaggerates gendered stereotypes, often for entertainment purposes. 'Drag' is a term that is often associated with gay/ lesbian communities and is often replaced with 'Drag King' and 'Drag Queen.' Some people who perform professionally outside gay/lesbian communities prefer the term 'male/female impersonator.'
- vii. **Genderqueer:** A person who was assigned to either the male or female gender at birth who identifies as either both male and female or neither male nor female.

- g. **Gender Expression:** This refers to how one outwardly manifests gender; for example, through name and pronoun choice, style of dress, voice modulation, etc. How one expresses gender might not necessarily reflect one's actual gender identity.
- h. **Gender Attribution / Gender Perception:** The process of making assumptions about another person's gender, based on factors such as choice of dress, voice modulation, body shape,
- i. **Gender Non-Conforming:** This term refers to people who do not conform to society's expectations for their gender roles or gender expression. Some people prefer the term 'gendervariant' among other terms
- j. **Pangender:** Refers to people who identify and/or express the many shades of gender. Multi-gender and omni-gender are other terms that may be used.
- k. **Heteronormative:** Refers to social roles and social structures that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations.
- l. **Heterosexism:** A system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favor of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. This includes the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to homosexuality or bisexuality. Heterosexism also refers to organizational discrimination against non-heterosexuals or against behaviours not stereotypically heterosexual. One example of this might be a girl who is told that when she grows up she will have a husband and not presented with any other options to consider
- m. **Patriarchy:** Patriarchy refers to an economic social construct where the bulk of power, authority, and control in society is held by men. This assigns greater importance to male identities and issues than to people of other gender identities.

- n. **Homophobia:** A range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). It can be expressed as antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, or hatred, may be based on irrational fear, and is sometimes related to religious beliefs.
- o. **Transphobia:** This refers to the fear or hatred of transgender people or gender non-conforming behavior. Like biphobia, transphobia can also exist among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as well as among heterosexual people.
- p. **Biphobia:** This refers to the fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against bisexuals and bisexual behaviour.
- q. **LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQA:** These are acronyms refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning and Asexual persons
- r. **'Coming Out':** Or, 'coming out of the closet,' this is the process of becoming aware of one's queer sexual orientation, identity, accepting it, and telling others about it.
- s. **Internalized homophobia:** internalized homophobia happens when LGBTQ individuals are subjected to society's negative perceptions, intolerance and stigmas towards LGBTQ people and as a result, turn those ideas inward believing they are true

## What are sexual rights?

The World Health Organization defines sexual rights to include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;
- seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality;
- sexuality education;
- respect for bodily integrity;
- choose their partner;
- decide to be sexually active or not;
- consensual sexual relations;
- consensual marriage;
- decide whether or not, and when, to have children
- Pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.



1. ***What's the distinction between Sex and Gender?***

Sex refers to a person's biological status either male or female, and is associated primarily with physical attributes external genitalia and internal anatomy. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women.

2. ***How does a person know if they are Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual?***

The main attractions that inform an individual's sexual orientation typically emerge during early adolescence and puberty. These patterns of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction may arise without any prior sexual experience. Some people know that they are

lesbian, gay, or bisexual for a long time before they actually pursue relationships with other people. Some people engage in sexual activity (with same-sex and/or othersex partners) before defining or labeling their sexual orientation. Prejudice and discrimination make it difficult for many people to come to terms with their sexual orientation so claiming or 'coming out' as a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity may be a slow process.

3. ***What causes a person to have a particular sexual orientation?***

Scientists have failed to find exact reasons that make an individual to develop a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. It is mostly attributed to nature living most people with or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation. In other words, people do not choose to be heterosexual or homosexual, sexual orientation is determined by nature

## SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

### 4. ***Is homosexuality a mental or sexual disorder?***

No, lesbian, gay, and bisexual orientations are not disorders. Both heterosexual and homosexual sexual orientations are normal aspects of human sexuality. They have historically existed in different cultures and eras

### 5. ***Can therapy, exorcism 'prayers' and counseling change a person's sexual orientation from 'Gay' to 'Straight'?***

To date there is no scientific evidence that proves that therapy and counselling aimed at modifying a person's sexual orientation is effective or safe. As noted above, sexual orientation is determined by nature and people do not get to choose their sexual orientation. The promotion of conversion therapy or counselling only serves to reinforce prejudices and discrimination against Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual persons.

### 6. ***What is the distinction between gender identity and***

### ***sexual orientation?***

Gender identity and sexual orientation are distinct concepts. Sexual orientation refers to an individual's enduring romantic or sexual attraction to another person. Gender identity refers to one's internal sense of being either male female, or something else. Transgender people may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual, in a similar way as cisgender people.

### 7. ***How does someone know that they are transgender?***

Transgender people experience a disconnect between the gender assigned at birth and their inner sense of self in a variety of ways and may become aware of their transgender identity at any age. They may have vague feelings of "not fitting in" with people of their assigned sex or specific wishes to be something other than their assigned sex. Some embrace their transgender feelings,

## SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.

while others struggle with feelings of shame or confusion.

### 8. ***What type of prejudice and discrimination do LGBTI+ experience in their lives?***

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) persons experience different forms of prejudice in their daily lives. These prejudices often result in harassment and violence against LGBT persons. In addition these prejudices are used to justify the unequal treatment or discrimination of LGBT persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. For example stereotypes are often used to deprive LGBT persons, job opportunities, housing, and access health care services including sexual and reproductive healthcare services; as well as the right to participate in the decision making processes in the community. Prejudices are also

manifested in laws such as the Penal Code Act section 145 which criminalizes same sex sexual conduct, leaving LGBT persons vulnerable prosecution and imprisonment because of whom they are romantically or sexually attracted to. Further, these laws also fuel negative attitudes against LGB persons and are used by uncouth members of society to blackmail LGBT persons, by threatening to report them to the authorities if they do not give them a specified amount of money.

### 9. **Enjoyment of Human Rights.**

LGBTI+ persons are not seeking special rights or additional rights, but the observance of the same Human rights enjoyed by other persons. To protect human rights is to ensure that people receive some degree of decent, dignified and humane treatment.

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights** affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. This is further affirmed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other core international human rights instruments.

At the regional Level, **the African Charter on Human and People's Rights** stipulates in Article 2 that *“Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.*

At the National level, **the Constitution of Uganda 1995**, stipulates in Article 21 that *“All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.”*

In other words, the Government of Uganda has a legal obligation to safeguard the human rights of all persons, including LGBTI+ individuals. The government

is constitutional required to protect all persons from acts of discrimination or violence.

The enjoyment of human Rights can be limited by government but this should be within the confines of the law and the limitation should be permissible in a free and democratic society.

- **The Impact of social prejudices and stereotypes on the human rights of LGBT persons**

Social prejudices often lead to the violation of the fundamental human rights of LGBTI+ persons. This is in contravention of, **Article 21 (1) of the Constitution of Uganda which states that:** *“All persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.”*

## *The Human Rights at stake include:*

- **The right to equality and nondiscrimination;** which is affected when LGBTI+ persons are denied the enjoyment and protection of their basic civil, political, social and economic rights, on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **The right to Physical and Mental health;** LGBT persons who seek health care services of any kind encounter stigma, discrimination and humiliation. They are often confronted with discriminatory medical policies and practices, homophobic physicians and, the lack of adequate training for health care personnel regarding sexual orientation issues or the general assumption that all patients are heterosexuals.
- **The right to housing;** often LGBTI+ persons are denied housing on the basis of their sexual orientation.
- **The right to education;** is restricted, when LGBT persons are denied education opportunities or are subjected to harassment and bullying in schools because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- The rights **to *freedom expression and freedom association*** is affected because of the criminalization of same sex relationships and homophobic climate, which makes it nearly impossible for LGBT persons to freely associate or express themselves. It also restricts the dissemination of information about safe sex practices for same sex couples.

- **The right to work and earn a living; which is affected by discriminatory employment policies and practices which deny LGBTI+ persons employment on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.** The lack of employment opportunities or protections negatively impact on the livelihoods of LGBT persons and often contributes to poverty.
- **The right to dignity and to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment is** infringed when LGBTI+ persons are subjected to violent attacks by either members of the community or by law enforcement officers. This right is further violated by dehumanizing investigative practices, body searches and arbitrary arrests by the police.
- **The right to privacy** is infringed by the existence of 'Sodomy' or anti-homosexuality laws, which prohibit consensual sexual relationships between adults of the same sex. These laws are an unnecessary intrusion in the private sexual conduct of consenting adults.
- The right to participate in civic affairs.

- **LGBTI+ and inclusive economic development.**

LGBTI+ persons have the potential and ability to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the nation, if granted full and equal opportunities. However, when LGBTI+ persons are denied equal employment opportunities, are targets of violence, stigmatized or are denied education opportunities, their contribution to the economy is diminished. This negatively impacts the economic development of the nation. A Country's economy cannot advance, if a section of the population is denied a full and equal participation in the society.



| FACTS   | MYTHS  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ LGBT are not asking for special rights, but they want to enjoy the same human rights and legal protections like other persons</li> <li>➤ Same sex relationships have for long been part of African culture.</li> <li>➤ STDS and other infectious diseases are not unique to LGBT persons; they are also common amongst heterosexual relationships.</li> <li>➤ LGBT people are capable of becoming parents and nurturing children</li> <li>➤ Social stigma, violence and abuse have a negative health impact on LGBT persons and could lead to depression and drug abuse.</li> <li>➤ LGBT people are law abiding citizens who pay their taxes and can work and serve in any meaningful capacity in the society.</li> <li>➤ Not all LGBT people have sexual relations with persons of the same sex. Some are celibate others cover their sexual orientation by having sexual relations with persons of the opposite sex. Some are even married.</li> <li>➤ Pedophilia is not limited to LGBTI+ but also Heterosexuals are involved in pedophilia practices.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ LGBT behavior is foreign and imported. It is 'Un-African'</li> <li>➤ It is a learnt sexual behavior and a lifestyle choice.</li> <li>➤ Most Gay men use diapers.</li> <li>➤ LGBT people are left handed.</li> <li>➤ People become LGBT for monetary gains</li> <li>➤ LGBT are the leading spreaders of HIV and other infectious diseases.</li> <li>➤ LGBT persons recruit young children into homosexuality</li> <li>➤ LGBT persons strategically go to schools to recruit pupils and students into homosexuality.</li> <li>➤ LGBT have the strategic agenda to spread immorality in Uganda</li> <li>➤ You can spot an LGBT person by the way they act or dress</li> <li>➤ Being gay is a phase one can outgrow.</li> <li>➤ LGBT people have a sexual obsession.</li> <li>➤ All gay men have HIV/AIDs</li> <li>➤ Homosexuality is a disorder</li> <li>➤ LGBTI+ cannot have children.</li> </ul> |



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