



# SOGIESC 101

A Quick Guide to Understanding SOGIESC  
for Family and Friends of LGBTQIA+ Persons





When we talk about sexuality or sexual orientation, our thoughts often focus on LGBTQI+ individuals.

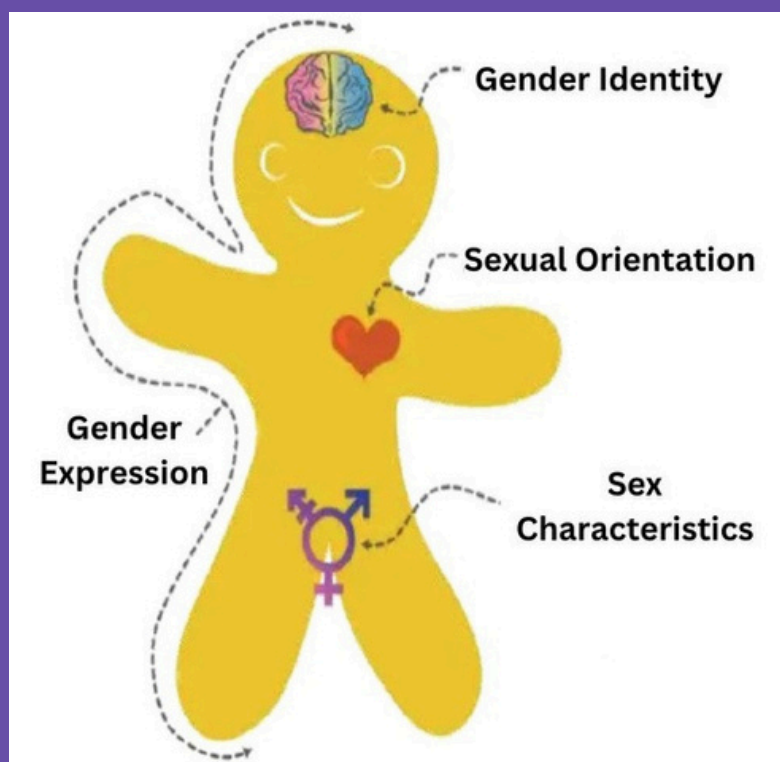
Although these conversations frequently involve us, here's the gist: it isn't just about us. We all have sexual orientations, sex, gender identities, and expressions.

# Understanding SOGIESC

Let's introduce you to a vibrant acronym that wraps all of this into a neat package:

**SOGIESC!** It's a neat blend that celebrates the diversity of how we all navigate this colourful spectrum of life. Buckle up for a cheerful exploration of **SOGIESC** – because everyone's story is worth celebrating!

SO	GIE		SC
Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity	Gender Expression	Sexual Characteristics



# SOGIESC Explained



**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation is a persistent pattern of romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of both) to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to multiple sexes or multiple genders. Sexual orientation is fluid; we all experience it differently. Some people may experience new attractions over time, and some may not.

**Heterosexual:** attraction to individuals of the opposite sex and gender.

**Homosexual:** attraction to individuals of the same sex or gender.

**Bisexual:** attraction to men and women or attraction to more than one gender.

**Pansexual:** attraction to individuals regardless of their gender, gender identity, or sex.

**Asexual:** limited or absence of sexual attraction to others.

## Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to a person's internal concept of self as man, woman, non-binary, agender, or any other gender term.



**Gender norms** refer to what is socially accepted as masculine or feminine and may differ from society to society. Some norms include a man earning more than a woman and women as child-bearers and primary caregivers. Gender norms cast individuals who do not adhere to expectations as 'different' or 'abnormal' and often privilege men over women in areas such as business, politics, and religion. All genders are deserving of equal opportunity regardless of the stereotype attached to genders and the gender binary.

**Pronouns** are terms people would like to be used in reference to them. There are binary gender pronouns like he/him and she/her, gender-neutral pronouns like they/them, and neopronouns such as e/em and ze/zir. Language is ever-evolving. As they do so do people's preferred gender pronouns.





**Gender Expression:** This is how a person decides to express or present their gender publicly. This can include behavior and outward appearances such as dress, hair, make-up, body language, and voice. Gender expression is described as feminine, masculine, or androgynous.



**Sex characteristics** refer to a person's chromosomal, gonadal, and anatomical features. These include primary characteristics such as reproductive organs and genitalia, chromosomal structures, and hormones, and secondary characteristics such as muscle mass, hair distribution, breasts, and body structure.

# Facts About LGBTQIA+ Identities

It is crucial to emphasize that being attracted to the same sex or identifying with diverse gender identities and expressions is entirely normal and should be accepted without judgment. Society's understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity continues to evolve, leading to the declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder in the DSM-5, a significant milestone reflecting a more inclusive and empathetic approach to human diversity. It is essential to recognize that embracing LGBTQIA+ identities is not a Western import, as historical evidence reveals the existence of diverse sexual and gender identities in various cultures, including Africa. Contrary to misconceptions, pre-colonial Africa had rich traditions that acknowledged and even celebrated different expressions of gender and sexual orientation. It is crucial to dispel the myth that LGBTQIA+ identities are incompatible with African culture and to promote a more accurate understanding that these identities have deep roots in the continent's history and traditions. It is essential to recognize that self-acceptance and celebration are empowering journeys.



LGBTQIA+ people should be supported to embrace the uniqueness of their identities with pride. Understanding that one's authentic self is a beautiful contribution to the rich tapestry of human diversity is crucial to self-actualization and dignified living. Only when one is fully supported to actualize one's best self can one contribute meaningfully to one's community and society at large.





# Sexuality and Rights

Sexuality is a natural aspect of our existence. Various factors, including biology, society, culture, economics, environment, religion, and context, influence our expressions and experiences of sexuality. Consequently, each person's sexuality is a distinctive blend of influences, resulting in a unique experience and expression.

Several laws, treaties, and human rights instruments are relevant to LGBTQIA+ rights nationally, regionally, and internationally. Nationally, some laws protect all citizens of the country. These exist alongside anti-LGBT laws that have been in place since the colonial era, such as the Criminal and Penal Codes which criminalize “carnal knowledge against the order of nature” - often interpreted to mean homosexuality, the Shari'a law which exists in 12 Northern states and criminalizes sodomy which translates to anal intercourse between men and men and women in some states and the more recent Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (2014) which criminalizes the solemnization and witnessing of same-sex marriages and until recently, the registration of gay clubs and societies.



Protective legislation that applies to all Nigerians, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community, includes the Nigerian constitution and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (2015), which is an act that prohibits all forms of violence against all persons in private and public life and provides maximum protection and remedies for victims. Regionally, the Resolution on Protection against Violence and Other Human Rights Violations against Persons based on their actual or Imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity, also known as Resolution 275, is the most relevant protective human rights instrument at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights which strongly urges States to end all acts of violence and abuse, whether committed by State or non-state actors, including by enacting and effectively applying appropriate laws prohibiting and punishing all forms of violence including those targeting persons based on their imputed or actual sexual orientation or gender identities, ensuring proper investigation and diligent prosecution of perpetrators, and establishing judicial procedures responsive to the needs of victims.

Furthermore, there is a set of human rights that relate to sexuality and reproduction. These rights allow individuals to make informed and meaningful decisions about their sexual health and well-being,

including their sexual orientation, relationships, sexual activity, family planning, and control over their bodies.

Knowing your rights is essential to have good sexual and reproductive health.

**There are 10 of these rights; they are**

The right to equality

The right to participation

The right to life and to be free from harm

The right to privacy

The right to personal autonomy and to be recognized as an Individual before the law

The right to think and express oneself freely

The right to health

The right to know and learn

The right to choose whether or not to marry or have children

The right to have your rights upheld

The above rights state that every individual is entitled to the realization of their sexuality and sexual pleasure and should be free from any form of coercion, discrimination, and violence. These rights apply to everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, HIV status, sexual orientation, or health status.



# Sexuality, Pleasure and Sexual Orientation

Sexuality is a broader concept than sexual orientation. It encompasses a broad spectrum of aspects related to an individual's sexual desires, attractions, behaviors, and identities. It encompasses various dimensions, including but not limited to physical, emotional, and social aspects of human sexuality. Sexual orientation specifically refers to a person's enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to individuals.

The experience of sexual pleasure encompasses more than just physical sensations. While it sometimes involves physical stimulation, it also sometimes involves finding happiness and connection in different ways, like feeling emotions, understanding the mind, and connecting with others socially. Some people find sexual pleasure in sharing intimate moments with a partner, while others feel affirmed in their sexual identity.

As time goes on, one might explore different avenues to find sexual satisfaction or encounter a change in what brings them pleasure.

For young LGBTQI+ individuals, embracing and accepting oneself often paves the way for a guilt-free and informed expression of their sexuality.

Many young LGBTQI+ individuals first encounter sexuality through pornography, but unfortunately, this medium often lacks comprehensive education and safety tips. As a result, they may not receive vital information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including safe sex practices. Young LGBTQI+ persons must have access to accurate and inclusive SRHR education to empower them to make informed decisions about their sexual health and well-being and to help them identify potentially harmful situations involving other people.



# Supporting your LGBTQIA+ Family and Friends

First and foremost, it's important to respond with empathy, love, and acceptance. Coming out can be a deeply personal and often challenging experience for individuals, so your initial reaction significantly affects how they feel supported and validated.

- Listen without judgment: Allow them to share their feelings and experiences without interrupting or imposing their opinions.
- Express your support: Reassure them that you love them and accept them for who they are. A simple "I love you" or "I'm here for you" can make a difference.
- Educate yourself: Take the initiative to learn more about their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. This shows that you're committed to understanding and supporting them better.
- Respect their journey: Understand that coming out is a process, and they may need time to adjust. Respect their privacy, and don't pressure them to come out to others before they're ready.
- Offer resources and support: Depending on their needs, offer to help them find support groups, LGBTQ+ organizations, or counseling services if they're struggling.

- Be an ally: Stand up against discrimination and advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights. Your support doesn't end with your loved one—extend it to the broader community.
- Check-in regularly: Keep the lines of communication open and check in with them regularly to see how they're doing. Let them know that you're always available to talk.
- Use their preferred name and pronouns: If they've shared a new name or pronoun with you, try to use it correctly. It demonstrates respect for their identity.



## What to do when you misgender someone

Language is ever evolving and so are the ways people like to be referred to when spoken about. Pronouns are sometimes a vital part of one's gender expression. Sometimes, they can give you insight into the gender of the person being spoken about; other times, pronouns don't give much away about one's gender. Either way, they are an important way to express that you see the individual being referred to the way they want to be seen and that you respect their identity the same way they respect yours.

That said, if you misgender someone, don't fret, mistakes are normal. Here's how to respond when you've accidentally misgendered someone:

- When corrected, apologize and use the right pronouns. For example, if you accidentally use she/her on a man who uses he/him pronouns, say a quick sorry and restate your sentence with the right pronouns.
- You may thank the person who corrected you as you would someone who provided you with new information that you previously did not have.
- Keep the conversation moving.



incases where you'd previously been informed about the person's pronouns the response is the same. Say a quick apology, use the right pronoun and keep the conversation moving. Also, consider being an active bystander in spaces where someone is being misgendered. **NOTE:** Your safety and the safety of the person being misgendered must take centre stage. If the situation is not safe enough for the conversation of pronouns then correcting someone might not be productive. Be sure the conversation is safe and that the person you are speaking up for would want people to know their pronouns before you make the correction.



## Family and Friends' Reactions

This section features the experiences of six Nigerian friends and family members (allies).

Realizing that a friend or family member is exploring their sexuality can be a surprising revelation for some, while others may have had an inkling. In either case, it's vital for their emotional well-being that they feel your support. By affirming your love and care for them and seeking to understand their experiences, you can debunk misconceptions and be better equipped to assist them on their journey.

*“My friend didn't come out to me, but I knew. We were classmates. The first time we met, I was attracted to him. However, he confirmed what I knew today. Because of him, I was doing research. I realized I was attracted to feminine boys. I'm glad he could trust and invite me to this gathering even though he didn't know how I would react. Moving forward, I would continue supporting him even with my confirmation of what I knew.”*

It's possible that you've learned about your loved one's sexuality or gender identity without them explicitly sharing it with you. This could be for a variety of reasons, such as their own personal journey or concerns about your reaction. However, it's important to remember that their decision to keep this part of themselves private doesn't diminish the value they place on your friendship.

Notwithstanding, it is important to reaffirm your acceptance, educate yourself about LGBTQIA+ issues, create a safe space for open conversations, check in regularly, and demonstrate unwavering support, respecting their privacy and implicitly trusting their judgment, even if they haven't explicitly come out to you.

“My reaction when they came out was normal. I was expecting it already. I was happy for them, and we moved on. When my sister came out, she said, “Timmie, I’m agender.” And I was like, “Okay.” No extra reaction, just normal talks and reactions. It’s more like I was expecting it. I’ll continue to accept her/them no matter the circumstances. She/they are still my blood, no matter what. Still my normal behaviour to her/them.”

Employing normalcy in showing your support and acceptance when your LGBTQIA+ family or friend comes out to you can be very important, as this goes a long way in making them comfortable and validating who they are. To continue supporting them, maintain open communication, normalise discussions about their identity, and demonstrate unconditional love and acceptance. Educate yourself further about their identity and the broader LGBTQIA+ community to deepen your understanding and empathy. Keep affirming their autonomy and validating their experiences, reassuring them that you are there for them through any challenges they may face.



By consistently demonstrating your unwavering support and acceptance, you can strengthen your bond and ensure your family or friends feel valued and respected for who they truly are. “When I found out that my friend was a trans woman, I felt like she was crazy because that was not what I expected. All I hoped was that she was a woman. Then she told me that she wasn't what I thought she was. I felt like beating the hell out of her because I felt deceived. But she made me understand more about her. Then, we became friends to the extent that I could stand up for her. But after today, I will be more open to this community because I feel like I understand more about the community.” like I understand more about the community.” Society, as it is currently designed, insists that all human beings must be heterosexual and cisgender (which means identifying with the sex assigned at birth, usually based on genitalia - male or female). However, people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics have always existed across time and cultures. What has changed over time is the general attitude toward diversity.

Imbibing society's teachings that violence against LGBTQIA + persons is justified because of beliefs and traditions is woefully wrong and against national and international human rights laws.

Openness to learning new information outside what you were taught is key to evolving as a person and a society. Not only would you be creating more avenues for support for your loved one(s), thereby enabling them to self-actualize and positively influence society, but you would also be evolving through gaining knowledge and positively influencing society by creating a safe and inclusive world for all humans.

"I was the one who asked him because I noticed some things. I asked him about it and his picture. I wanted to understand what he is. I asked, "Are you a boy or a girl?" But I still didn't understand after the explanation. But after the workshop, I understand a little better. I will continue to learn and try to understand and support him better. I am also trying to get used to using pronouns."

It is crucial to approach conversations about gender identity and expression with sensitivity and openness. Acknowledge the courage it takes for someone to share their identity, and express your commitment to supporting them unconditionally. Educate yourself about gender diversity and LGBTQIA+ experiences through workshops, literature, and online resources to deepen your understanding and empathy.



Practice using the correct pronouns and actively listen to your friend's experiences, validating their identity and respecting their autonomy.

Remember that learning and understanding may take time, but your willingness to educate yourself and support your friend will make a significant difference in their life. Keep the lines of communication open, allowing your friend to share their feelings and experiences with you, and continue to show them love and acceptance as they navigate their identity.

**“I found out in 2007/2008. I saw a picture of her with a girl. I didn't see it coming, but I accepted then, and up till now, I still accept. Coming here, I have become more comfortable with queer people. When I see gay men who act feminine, I admire it but feel uncomfortable. But now, after the workshop, I would be comfortable making friends with gay men.”**

Recognizing the importance of acceptance and growth in supporting LGBTQIA+ friends or family members is essential. Reflect on your journey of acceptance and acknowledge any discomfort or biases you may have experienced. Engage in self-reflection and education to challenge and overcome these feelings, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy towards LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Participate in discussions and expose yourself to diverse perspectives to expand your comfort zone and challenge stereotypes. Embrace the opportunity to form meaningful connections with LGBTQIA+ individuals, recognizing and celebrating the beauty of diversity in all its forms.

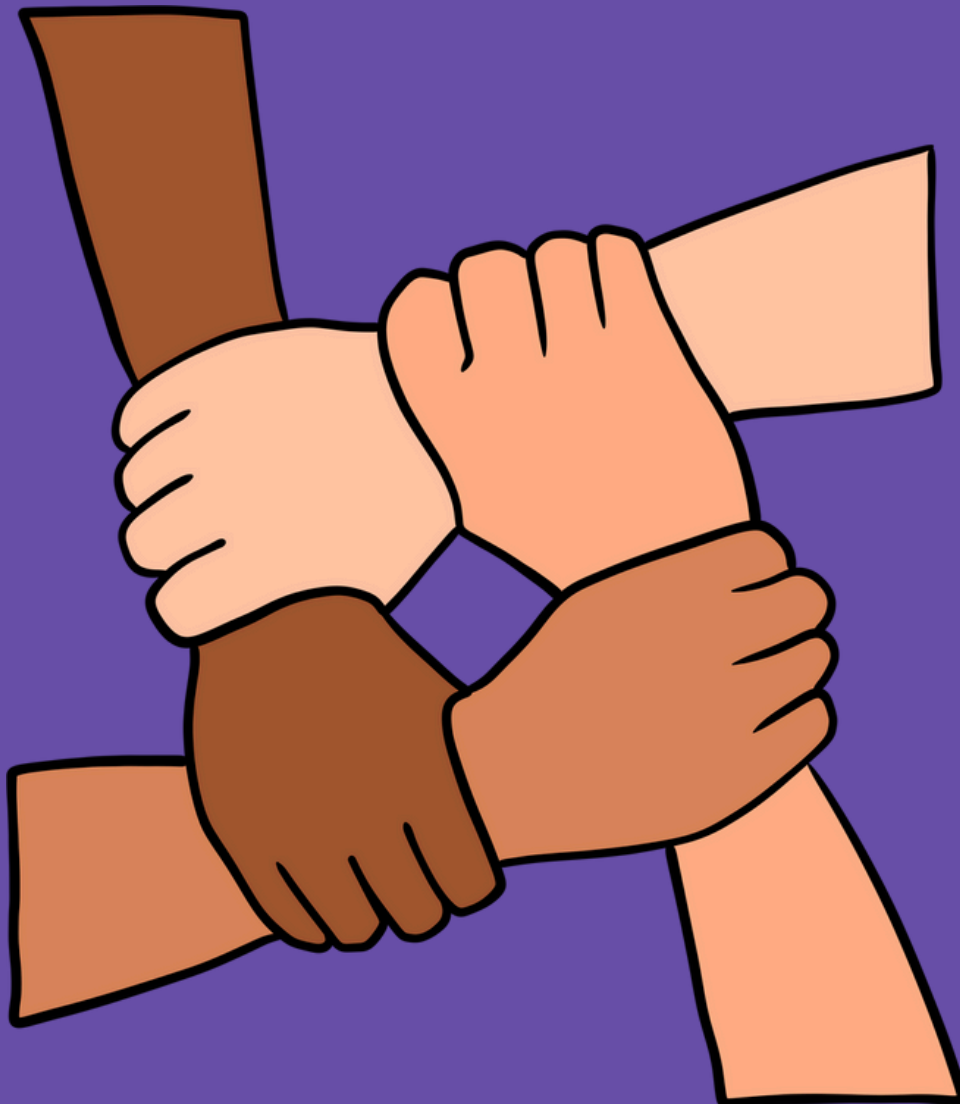
You can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for your LGBTQIA+ loved ones by continually striving to learn, grow, and cultivate empathy.

***“We have been close friends since childhood. I suspected that they were queer. I have been supportive, not judgmental, and accepted her as she is. I believe I am an ally and a member of the community. Going forward, I will keep supporting her and being by her side. We are family, and I can't throw my family away.”***

Allyship begins with supporting a close LGBTQIA+ friend, extends far beyond individual relationships, and transcends to contribute to broader advancements in LGBTQIA+ rights and visibility. By actively advocating for equality and inclusivity within their social circles and communities, allies can help challenge discriminatory attitudes and policies, promote understanding and acceptance, and create safer spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals to thrive. This may involve speaking out against



homophobic, transphobic, or discriminatory behavior, participating in LGBTQIA+ activism and advocacy efforts, and actively supporting LGBTQIA+ organizations and initiatives. By leveraging your privilege and platforms to amplify the voices and experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals, you, as an ally, can play a crucial role in advancing social progress and fostering a more equitable and just society for all.





## Debunking Myths

### **Lesbians**

Women (and some non-binary individuals) attracted to women romantically or sexually.

**Myth:** All lesbians are masculine.

**Reality:** Gender expression is independent of sexual orientation. Lesbians can present in diverse ways, not confined to any specific stereotype.

### **Gays**

Men attracted to men, but use it with caution as not all same-sex attracted men identify as gay.

**Myth:** Gays are not capable of being fathers.

**Reality:** Gay men can choose various paths to fatherhood, such as adoption, surrogacy, or co-parenting. Sexual orientation doesn't determine parenting ability.



<b>Intersex</b>	<p>Individuals born with variations in sex characteristics beyond the typical male/female binary.</p> <p><b>Myth:</b> Intersex people are a third gender.</p> <p><b>Reality:</b> Intersex is a variation in sex characteristics, not a separate gender identity. Intersex individuals may identify with various genders, including man, woman, or non-binary.</p>
<b>Gender non-conforming</b>	<p>People who don't identify strictly as man or woman, existing outside or between the gender binary.</p> <p><b>Myth:</b> Gender non-conforming people are transgender.</p> <p><b>Reality:</b> Gender expression and gender identity are distinct. Someone who doesn't conform to gender norms may not identify as transgender.</p>

## **Trans- persons**

People whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth, independent of sexual orientation.

**Myth:** Trans women are not "real" women.

**Reality:** Trans women are women, regardless of their assigned sex at birth. Their gender identity is valid and deserves respect.



# Glossary of LGBTQIA+



- **Aromantic** : An adjective used to describe a person who does not experience romantic attraction.
- **Nonbinary**: Nonbinary is an adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of man and woman.
- **Cisgender**: An adjective used to describe people who are not transgender. “Cis-” is a Latin prefix meaning “on the same side as,” and is therefore an antonym of “trans-.” A cisgender person is a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Trans woman**: A woman who was assigned male at birth may use this term to describe herself. She may shorten it to trans woman.
- **Trans man**: A man who was assigned female at birth may use this term to describe himself. He may shorten it to trans man.

# Glossary of LGBTQIA+



- **Questioning:** An adjective used by some people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- **Allosexual:** An adjective used to describe a person who experiences sexual attraction to others and is not asexual (e.g., an allosexual person).
- **Two-Spirit:** An adjective used by some Indigenous and First Nations people as an umbrella term to describe people who are not straight and/or cisgender. Many Indigenous communities have specific words in their language to describe these experiences, but some do not. This term should not be used to describe people who are not Indigenous.
- **Ally:** An adjective used to describe a heterosexual and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ people. The plural is allies.



# Where to Get Help for LGBTQIA+ People Facing Violations Due to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

<b>ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>HANDLES</b>
ISHRAI - Improved Sexual Health and Rights Advocacy Initiative	@ishrai_n (Instagram) @ishrainig (Twitter)
AHRDI - Access to Health & Rights Development Initiative	@ahrdinitiative (Instagram)
HAHAI - Hope Alive Initiative	@hahainigeria (Instagram)
ICARH International Centre for Advocacy on the Rights to Health	@icarh_ng (Instagram & Twitter)

# Where to Get Help for LGBTQIA+ People Facing Violations Due to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

<b>HELPLINE</b>	<b>STATE</b>
08156843504 08039663031	LAGOS
09074611520 08138520093 07033466851	LAGOS & BENIN
08035970810	BAUCHI
08002255422774	ABUJA



# Where to Get Help for LGBTQIA+ People Facing Violations Due to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

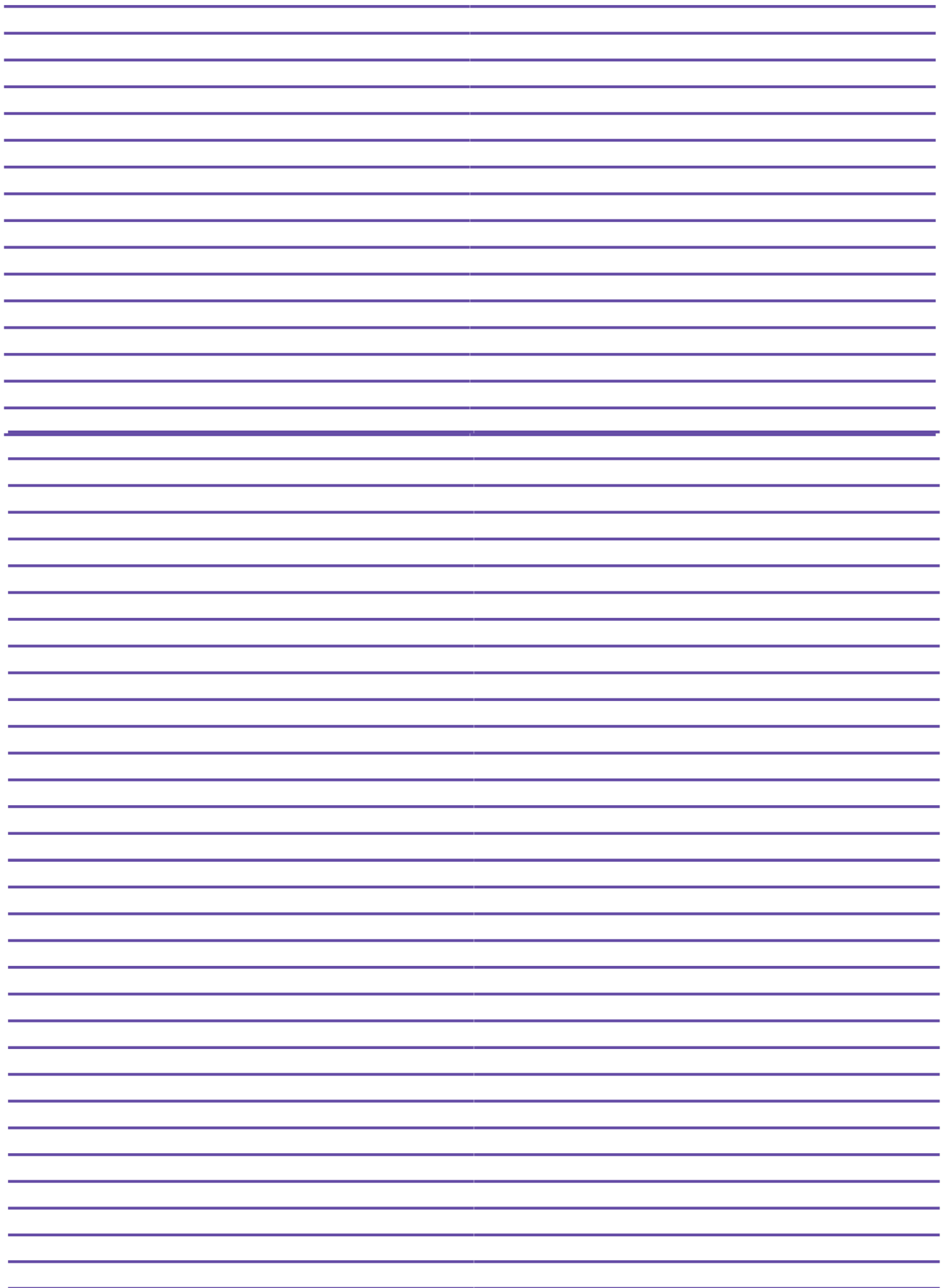
<b>ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>HANDLES</b>
THEDI The Total Health Empowerment and Development Initiative	@thediNigeria (Instagram & Twitter)
AGHI Access Good Health Initiative	@aghinigeria (Instagram & Twitter)
INCREASE	@increse_nig
WHER - Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative	@wher_initiative (Instagram) @WHERinitiative (Twitter)
TIERS The Initiative for Equal Rights	@tiersnigeria (Instagram & Twitter)



# Where to Get Help for LGBTQIA+ People Facing Violations Due to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

<b>HELPLINE</b>	<b>STATE</b>
09065509238 07065858417	BENUE
09065509238 07065858417	ENUGU
08186457675 07038322298 09027770808 08065187179	ABUJA
08065488417	NIGER
09088939562 08146337128	NATIONAL





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**Thanks for reading!**

**Wondering what SOGIESC means? It stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics. This guide explains the importance of celebrating our unique identities and fostering a more inclusive and respectful world for everyone. It starts with you!**

