

Challenges :

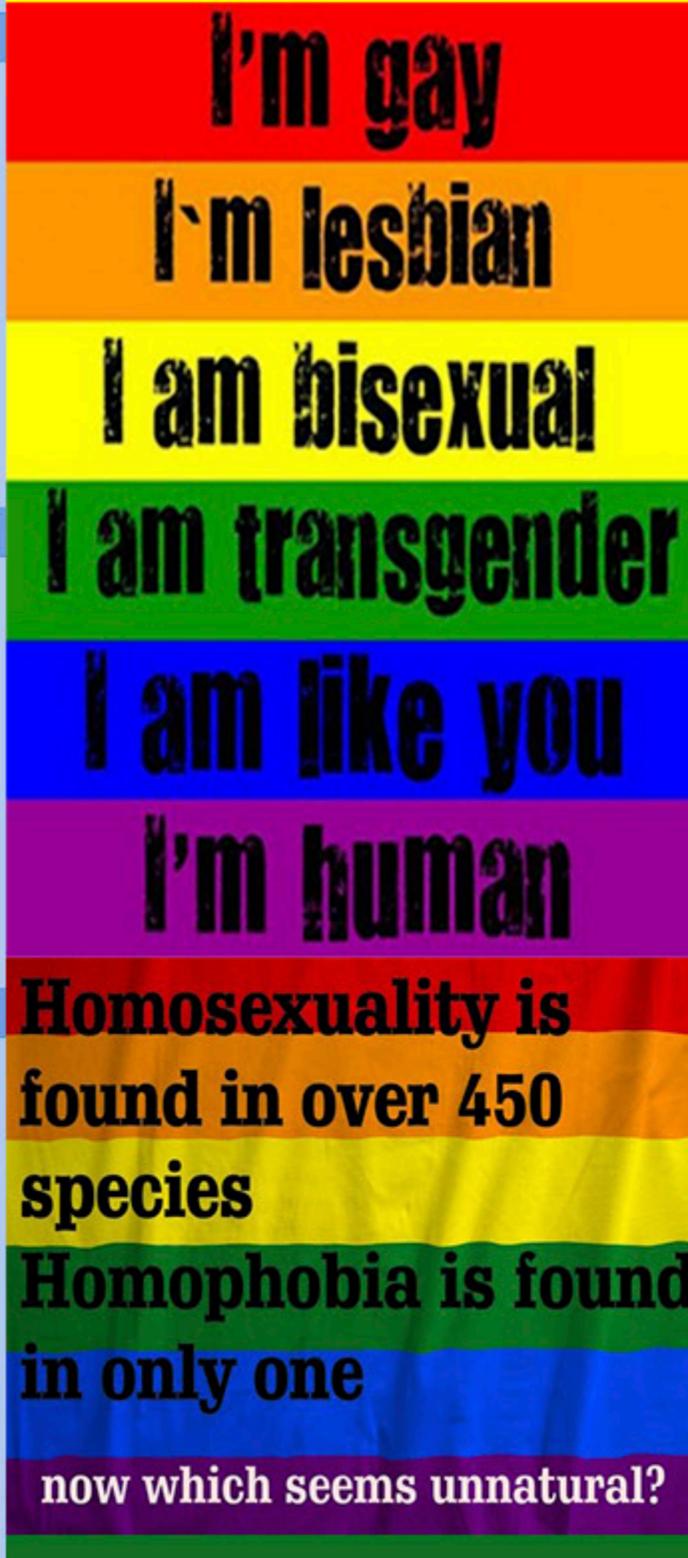
- Limited organizational capability and networking among LGBT
- Under represented in national forums and policy making
- Unawareness about LGBT issues leading to misunderstanding
- Stigma, stereo typing and discrimination
- Limited specific psycho-social, counseling and sexual health support
- Lack of events and programs for LGBT

Opportunities :

- Emerging voice and group from among LGBT community
- Program support from NACP in the Ministry of Health, RENEW, Lhaksam and Global Fund
- Buddhist compassion and social acceptance
- Increase awareness on health risks such as STI and HIV
- Increased research and reports on size estimates, sexual networking and behavior risks to help better understanding

Way Forward :

- Strengthen networks among LGBT develop as an organization
- Increase awareness through advocacy and education on LGBT issues
- Improve access to services for LGBT such as counseling, sexual health and protection
- Lobby for representation and inclusion of LGBTs in policy and decision making
- Disseminate communication for development materials on LGBT
- Support access to funds and opportunities for LGBT programs



LGBT Bhutan



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Understanding and supporting LGBT

(Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender) Bhutan

I AM HUMAN. I AM A BHUTANESE. I HAVE A FAMILY. I HAVE A DREAM.



Understanding and supporting LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender) Bhutan

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy calls for renewed efforts to reduce HIV infection rates, increase access to lifesaving care, and provision of continuum of care for people living and affected by HIV. Achieving these aims will require substantially greater progress in preventing new HIV infections especially among vulnerable and high risk populations. While past efforts have primarily focused on encouraging individuals to avoid risky sexual behaviors, the targets were on female sex workers, mobile populations and heterosexual contact tracing. A section of high risk population consisting of men who have sex with men (MSM) has been largely unaddressed because very little is known of this group. Within this group there maybe sub sections such as gay men, transgender, transvestite and intersex people who practice MSM. In recent times with better understanding of HIV, this group of population has come to the fore as one of the key affected populations (KAP). Along with women who have sex with women, this community has come to be known as the LGBTI or LGBT community.

Definition of terminologies used in LGBT community

TERM	DEFINITION
Bisexual	A bisexual is defined as a person who is attracted to and/or has sex with both men and women and who identifies with this as a cultural identity
Gay	The term 'gay' can refer to same-sex sexual attraction, same-sex sexual behavior, and same-sex cultural identity. 'Men who have sex with men (MSM)' should be used unless individuals or groups self-identify as gay
Gender identity	Gender differences arise through social roles and relations whereas sex is biologically determined. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth
Intersex	An intersex person is an individual with both male and female biological attributes (primary and secondary sexual characteristics)
Lesbian	'women who have sex with women' should be used unless individuals or groups self-identify as lesbians
LGBTI LGBT	LGBTI is an abbreviation that covers lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual, transgender, transvestite, and intersex people. Although it is preferable to avoid abbreviations when possible, LGBTI (or LGBT) has gained recognition because it emphasizes a diversity of sexuality and gender identities.
Sexual orientation	The term 'sexual orientation' refers to each person's profound emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different, the same, or both sexes.
Transgender	A transgender person has a gender identity that is different from his or her sex at birth. Transgender people may be male to female (female appearance) or female to male (male appearance). It is preferable to describe them as 'he' or 'she' according to their gender identity, i.e. the gender that they are presenting, not their sex at birth.
Transvestite	A person and especially a male who adopts the dress and often the behavior typical of the opposite sex especially for purposes of emotional or sexual gratification
Intersex	A person with discrepancy between the internal (testis and Ovary) and external genital organs.

Available evidence to date suggests that more than 90% of HIV transmission occurs through heterosexual route while a smaller percentage is spread through mother to child transmission, health interventions such as blood transfusion and sharing needles among intravenous drug users. There is very little knowledge on the prevalence of HIV among LGBT community because of the hidden nature of the community.

That however is in the past. In recent times members from the community have come forward to reclaim their rights and to dispel myths about them. They are networking and taking their message of understanding to others around the country and educating people about their choices. Despite the support from the government, civil society and other agencies, a number of challenges remain.

Myths and reality about LGBT

MYTH	REALITY
Sexual orientation is a choice and therefore can be changed	Although exact reasons for choice of sexual orientation is not known, there is evidence to prove that it is determined by biological (genetic), environmental and possibly hormonal factors. Similar to left handed people, homosexual people are born that way and their sexual orientation cannot be changed or rearranged.
LGBT people are mentally ill, abnormal and different	Sexual behavior and orientation exist along a continuum that ranges from people who are exclusively attracted to members of the same sex, to people who are equally attracted to members of both sexes, to people who are exclusively attracted to members of the opposite sex. All are normal.
LGBT orientation is rare and few in number, that is why they remain hidden	Approximately one in 10 persons is gay or lesbian with a higher prevalence for bisexuals. Gay men, lesbian women, and bisexuals are found in all walks of life and in all professions. They are now coming out of the closet with more acceptance and understanding
LGBT people are sexually more active and promiscuous	LGB persons are neither more nor less sexually promiscuous than heterosexuals. Like heterosexuals, many gay men and lesbians are involved in monogamous relationships, considering themselves partners and committed to each other for life. Some gay men and lesbians may also choose to remain celibate, and others may have multiple partners, just as some heterosexuals do.
LGBT people should remain hidden as they may influence children and youth to be gay.	Sexuality is neither more nor less a central or defining part of an LGB person's life than it is for a heterosexual person. Similar to heterosexuals they have their work, aspirations, dreams, friends, family and leisure to concentrate on. Thus a LGBT persons' sexuality would not influence anyone to be gay.
It's okay to call LGB persons names like "chhakha", "pholay-molay", "faggot," and "homo" because they are "Deviant."	Every human is different - in character, mannerism, attitude, loyalty and action. LGBTs are also different and they have a sexual orientation that is outside the accepted statistical norm. Being different does not mean being deviant, otherwise left handed people and Bhutanese with curly hair who are also in a minority would be deviant. Such terms are derogatory and insulting.
LGBT have a different lifestyle and can be identified	Similar to heterosexuals, LGBT people live normal lives as heterosexuals and come in different shapes, sizes and attitude. Everyone just wants to be accepted for who they are as a person and not as a LGBT.
LGBT is a nuisance to society because they are into sex, drugs and are immoral	LGBT are also Bhutanese and have an important part to play in our society, community and country. Many continue to contribute to our development quietly and dedicatedly. It is up to the rest of the Bhutanese to accept them as brothers, sisters, moms, dads, uncles, aunties, friends and neighbors.