People may use either, both, or another pronoun such as 'ze.' If you're unsure what pronoun to use, just ask.

Gender non-conforming and genderqueer people are those who do not identify as either men or women. We may feel that our gender falls somewhere in between. Some gender non-conforming and genderqueer identities include both male and female elements, or that we are neither. People who do not identify as men or women and who identify as transgender may use male pronouns (he/him). Gender non-conforming and genderqueer people are those who do not identify as men or women. We may feel that our gender identity is somewhere in between.

Genderqueer is a broad umbrella term that includes transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary identities and issues before reacting negatively. Common questions about transgender people are often asked without consideration of the individual's needs or experiences. This pamphlet was created to answer some of the most common questions about transgender people. Transgender and gender non-conforming persons in Kenya.

Who is included in the term transgender?

Transgender is an umbrella term that includes transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people. This production was made possible with support from UHAI EASHRI.

Contact Information:

Jinsiangu

Facebook group or contact us on: TransgenderKenya. For more information, please join our Facebook group or contact us on TransgenderKenya.

What challenges do transgender Kenyans face?

There are challenges that transgender Kenyans face due to discrimination and lack of access to basic human rights. We frequently have problems with lack of awareness, lack of resources, and lack of education.

Some transgender people seek hormone therapy and surgeries as a way of making their bodies match their gender identity. This may include hormonal replacement therapy and/or gender-affirming surgeries. This includes both male and female elements, or that we are neither.

Do not refer to a transgender person as 'it,' as this is dehumanising and disrespectful.

Some transgender people undergo a physical transition process to make their bodies match their gender identity. This may include hormonal replacement therapy and gender-affirming surgeries. This includes both male and female elements, or that we are neither.

What should I do if my friend, lover, or family member tells me that they're trans?

If someone comes out to you as transgender, they're probably nervous about your reaction or about being rejected. It takes a lot of courage to come out to someone about your gender identity. Be non-judgmental and ask what you can do to support them. If you're surprised, concerned, or even upset, this is normal. However, it's important to remember that your reaction may be affecting your friend, lover, or family member. They may feel alone, as if their gender identity is unusual. If you have any questions, you can reach out to a support group or a therapist.

What is the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity?

Your sexual orientation determines the gender of the people you are attracted to. Your gender identity, on the other hand, is how you understand your own gender: whether you are male, female, both, neither, or to people of different sexual orientations. Your gender identity, on the other hand, is how you understand your own gender: whether you are male, female, both, neither, or to people of different sexual orientations.

Being trans is not a mental illness, but a medical condition. Many of the psychological challenges that transgender people face are caused by societal discrimination and lack of access to medical treatment. This may include depression or other mental illnesses. Some transgender people seek hormone therapy and surgeries as a way of making their bodies match their gender identity. This may include hormonal replacement therapy and gender-affirming surgeries. This includes both male and female elements, or that we are neither.

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**Intersex 101: An Introduction to the “I”**

**What does Intersex mean?**
An intersex person is a person whose body is not easily categorised into the binary categories of “male” or “female.” This may be due to the shape of our genitals, hormonal composition and/or secondary sex characteristics.

Sometimes intersex people are identified as such at birth. Others don’t know that we’re intersex until later in life. When a person is deemed intersex at birth, doctors and/or families will often decide the gender of the individual and raise them as such, rather than allowing us to determine our own gender.

**Are intersex people male or female?**
It depends on the person. Some intersex people identify as male, and others as female. Others identify as intersex or as a third gender.

**Do I call an intersex person she, he or it?**
It’s very important to use the correct pronoun when you’re referring to an intersex person, as it shows that you respect our gender identity. Some intersex people identify as male and use male pronouns (he/him). Others identify as female and use female pronouns (she/her). Those who identify as intersex or third gender may use either, both, or a third pronoun such as ‘ze.’ If you’re not sure what pronoun to use, just ask.

Do not refer to an intersex person as ‘it,’ as this is dehumanising and disrespectful.

**What challenges do intersex Kenyans face?**
The common understanding of gender in Kenya is a binary one. We’re taught to believe that there are two sexes – male and female – that correspond to two genders – man and woman. But intersex people don’t fit into these categories. And society is not kind to those of us who are not easily categorised.

Discrimination begins from birth, as many doctors still perform infant genital mutilation (IGM) when a baby’s genitals are ambiguous. This “normalising” surgery often involves removal of part of the genitals. It’s usually medically unnecessary, and often leads to the loss of sexual sensation and other physical problems. IGM not only violates our right to bodily autonomy, it also doesn’t take into account an individual’s understanding of their own gender. The only surgery that should be performed on intersex children is corrective surgery if necessary, for instance to open up a urinary passage if it’s closed.

In childhood, many intersex people face bullying and harassment from our peers and even our teachers. Intersex children are often seen as a curse or a taboo. Parents who are ashamed of having an intersex child, or who wish to protect us from discrimination, will often isolate their children. This keeps us from socializing and being active members of the community. Isolation hinders the development of self-confidence, and may lead to social anxiety and depression.

As adults, the challenges that we face still relate to the struggle to fit or to break out of a binary system. Some of us are able to lead perfectly happy lives. Others face more problems, especially those of us who are visibly gender ambiguous, or whose gender identity does not match up to the gender we were given at birth. We face street harassment, employment discrimination, and have difficulty accessing services and spaces meant for women or men only. Many of us have faced social isolation, and in some cases physical or sexual assault.

Accessing health care is difficult, as most medical professionals aren’t familiar with intersex people and treat us poorly, gawking at their bodies when they’re meant to be treating us. By virtue of having bodies that often fall outside of the culturally-accepted norms, trans and gender non-conforming people are excluded from safe sex education and reproductive health services.

**What should I do if my child is intersex?**
It’s okay to have an intersex child. Your child may be different than other people, but this is nothing to be ashamed of. Don’t hide or abuse your child – encourage them to socialise and explore the world and their own identity. There might be hard and confusing times, but with love and patience you will get through it. Educate yourself about intersexuality and let your child determine their own gender. You can find support by connecting with other intersex people and family members through Jinsiangu and in online forums.

**What should I do if my friend or lover tells me that they’re intersex?**
If someone comes out to you as intersex, they’re probably nervous about your reaction or about being rejected. It takes a lot of courage to come out as intersex, so you can start by thanking this person for trusting you and assuring them that you accept them. Give them the space to talk about their thoughts and feelings without judgement, and ask what you can do to support them. If you’re surprised, concerned or even upset, this is normal. However, it is best to take the time to educate yourself about intersexuality before reacting negatively.

**What can Jinsiangu do to help?**
Jinsiangu offers peer support groups, counselling and information.
Transgender 101:
An Introduction to the “T”

What does Transgender mean?

Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity doesn’t match up to the gender they were assigned at birth. When we’re born (and sometimes even before that), the doctor takes a look at our genitals and says “it’s a boy” or “it’s a girl.” For transgender people, the initial label placed on us is not correct. For example, a person may be born with a “female” body but know that they are really male.

Who is included in the term transgender?

Transgender is an umbrella term that includes transgender, transsexual, gender non-conforming, genderqueer and bi-gender people, among others. These are not all of the terms that we use to describe ourselves, but they are some of the most common.

A transgender man is someone who was labelled female at birth, and who identifies as male. Trans men are sometimes referred to as male-to-female (FTM). A transgender woman is someone who was labelled male at birth, and who identifies as female. Trans women are sometimes referred to as male-to-female (MTF).

Some transgender people undergo a physical transition process to make our bodies match our gender identity. This may include hormonal replacement therapy and/or gender-affirming surgeries. People who have undergone physical transition are sometimes called transsexual. Many people simply prefer to use the short term trans.

Gender non-conforming and genderqueer people are those who do not identify as either men or women. We may feel that our gender includes both male and female elements, or that we are neither or somewhere in between. Some gender non-conforming and genderqueer people identify as transgender, and some don’t.

Do I call transgender people she, or he or it?

It’s very important to use the correct pronoun when you’re referring to a transgender person, as it shows that you respect our gender identity. Typically, trans women use female pronouns (she/her) and trans men use male pronouns (he/him). Gender non-conforming people may use either, both, or another pronoun such as ‘ze’. If you’re not sure what pronoun to use, just ask.

Do not refer to a transgender person as ‘it,’ as this is dehumanising and disrespectful.

What is the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity?

Your sexual orientation determines the gender of the people you are attracted to: whether male, female, both, or to people who don’t fit into any of these categories. Everybody has a sexual orientation. Straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual and asexual are examples of different sexual orientations. Your gender identity, on the other hand, is how you understand your own gender: whether you are female, male, or a third or other gender. Everybody has a gender identity, but transgender people often experience discrimination because their gender identity is considered to be unusual.

Are transgender people mentally ill?

Being trans is not a mental illness, but a medical condition. Many of us live with gender dysphoria, which is a feeling of disassociation with our bodies and anxiety, anger and/or sadness about our assigned gender. This is usually treated through hormonal replacement therapy and gender-affirming surgeries, along with counselling. While gender dysphoria isn’t a mental illness, it can cause serious distress and discomfort if it goes unaddressed. This is why access to medical treatment is extremely important for the transgender community. Many transgender people also experience discrimination and harassment, which can increase gender dysphoria.

What challenges do transgender Kenyans face?

To a great extent there are no defined laws to criminalize transgender and gender non-conforming persons in Kenya. However, there are laws that continue to heighten our vulnerability to harassment and violations from state agents. This includes but is not limited to frequent unreported cases of intimidation; arbitrary arrest and detention; humiliating body checks and frisking to determine one’s biological sex; false accusation of intent to impersonate or false pretense as our physical anatomy might not match our gender expression and identity.

Laws that are targeted at sex workers largely affect trans people going about their business, as the question of our perceived gender brings up the issue of dressing up to solicit for sexual favours and or money. Laws that target trafficking of obscene materials and publications are used to hinder easy access to information and tools that are important in our transitioning. For example sex toys used to pack and silicon breast enhancers. By virtue of having bodies that often fall outside of the culturally-accepted norms, trans and gender non-conforming people are excluded from safe sex education and reproductive health services.

Because of stigma against gender minorities, many transgender people have difficulty accessing basics such as employment, housing and education. Some also struggle with trauma following violent attacks, social isolation and/or sexual assault.

Transgender people suffer when we’re forced to fit into systems that don’t recognise or include us. We frequently have problems obtaining official documentation (such as national ID cards and passports) that match our gender and names of choice. As a result, it’s more difficult for trans people to access services, vote and travel across borders. Accessing gender-segregated spaces such as public toilets or changing rooms is problematic.

Some transgender people seek hormone therapy and surgeries as part of the physical transition process and to ease gender dysphoria. Doctors will often refuse to grant these medical treatments because of a lack of understanding of transgender health needs. In addition to this, trans people have problems accessing everyday health care because our bodies or gender presentation look “different” than other peoples’. This may lead to ridicule or denial of services from the very medical professionals who are meant to be protecting the health of all Kenyans.

What should I do if my friend, lover or family member tells me that they’re trans?

If someone comes out to you as transgender, they’re probably nervous about your reaction or about being rejected. It takes a lot of courage to come out as trans, so you can start by thanking this person for trusting you and assuring them that you accept them. Give them the space to talk about their thoughts and feelings without judgement, and ask what you can do to support them. If you’re surprised, concerned or even upset, this is normal. However, it is best to take the time to educate yourself about transgender identities and issues before reacting negatively.

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Jinsiangu offers peer support groups, counselling and information.