

WAS Statement concerning actions to support gender diversity worldwide

The World Association of Sexual Health (WAS), formerly World Association for Sexology, recognizes that sexology is a developing field where theories and ideas are constantly evolving and changing while being subjected to scientific scrutiny. Moreover, WAS, has since its foundation, endeavoured to work within a human rights framework moving along with the times, seeking always to build respect towards different human communities such as women, gay and lesbian individuals, members of the trans and gender diverse communities (TGD), and intersex individuals among other stigmatized and discriminated communities.

WAS has, along these lines, proclaimed its Declaration of Sexual Rights which: “STATES that equality and non-discrimination are foundational to all human rights protection and promotion and include the prohibition of any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, including disability, age, nationality, marital and family status, sexual orientation and gender identity, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation.

RECOGNIZES that persons’ sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and bodily diversities require human rights protection”.

WAS’s member organizations have, over the years, worked consistently in producing evidence against the pathologization of TGD persons, as well as collaborating with other organizations on this task.

WAS, however, acknowledges:

- that it has not engaged sufficiently with TGD communities
- It has Invited speakers to its Congresses, whose theories about gender development have been perceived as pathologizing, without sufficiently paying attention to narratives and theories shared by affected communities.
- Ignored some insights about the consequences of pathologizing practices for health and well-being of TGD persons.

In response to demands from both individuals, groups and organisations representing the TGD communities, WAS, intending to increase its knowledge of

advances recently made in furthering the self-determination, dignity, and integrity of TGD people, called for a consultation.

Through this consultation:

- WAS recognizes the dignity and integrity of those of us who identify as TGD persons and the need to work with them, include their voices and recommendations to strengthen WAS as an inclusive organization where all people can feel recognized, respected, and included, along with their families, friends, and allies,
- Expresses its regret for having given access in some of its Congresses, to presenters whose opinions may be openly in conflict with the latest WPATH Standards of Care for TGD people. This may have contributed to strengthen the stigma, discrimination, and trauma that TGD persons have been and are subjected to,
- Realises that TGD people are still under attack and their lives remain at stake because of ideologies that exist within cultural, political, religious, and scientific contexts, which reinforce the pathologization and fetishization of TGD people in the medical and other professional fields.
- Recognises that contributions offered by the field of sexology carry potential to alleviate or perpetuate the marginalization of TGD communities. In the latter case, this may negatively affect efforts directed towards the protection and inclusion of TGD people, for instance, within state laws and affect efforts towards decriminalisation; non-discrimination; legal gender recognition; and equitable access to resources and opportunities as well as access to adequate gender affirming health care.

Therefore, WAS commits to:

- A. Contextualise and address the need for research; resource; material and guidelines development; and stakeholder education on gender affirming care.
- B. Consult with TGD representatives in its Scientific Committees on invitations, choice of presenter, and titles of invited lectures regarding TGD communities. Related to this, WAS has already changed the name of the Sexual and Gender Health Lecture.
- C. Include, at least one individual from the TGD communities to assist in the review papers/abstracts relevant to issues and topics that may concern the community. WAS Scientific committees, will apply in Congresses and meetings, its standards of acceptance, including reconsideration of work which entails violation of human rights, unethical research, or lack of scientific rigor.
- D. Promote improved community representation by strengthening policies and practices which can result in TGD persons being added to and enabled to optimally participate in the governance of WAS.
- E. Acknowledge that there are organisations whose attitudes and policies represent a serious setback in access to health care for TGD persons. WAS therefore pledges to consult with organisations and networks of TGD individuals affiliated to WAS to provide scientific information that affirmingly connects with diverse experiences and

constructive feedback that contributes towards transformative gender and human rights initiatives.

F. Endeavour to take an active stand in supporting events that recognize and affirm gender diversity beyond the cisgender gender binary system within regions where WAS, through its member-organizations, is present.

G. Commit to taking more active stances by issuing relevant statements on discrimination, fetishization, pathologization, and unscientific ideologies concerning issues regarding gender diversities. These will be developed by the WAS Scientific, Sexual Rights, and Media Committees and other relevant Committees and task forces.

Furthermore:

A. WAS will strive to support information and projects which inform critical knowledge systems and outputs, and which can potentially lead towards the desired inclusion and access to sexual health and the rights therein. As well as to disseminate information that supports initiatives directed to decriminalization efforts, access to health care, and the legal recognition of TGD persons in member countries affiliated to WAS.

B. WAS recognizes the importance of not misgendering and demeaning TGD persons regardless of what is indicated on an identity document and to this extent commits to continue aligning its organizational processes to recognize TGD persons using peoples' preferred names and pronouns. This will be reflected on (online) registration forms, attendance registers, nametags, and other administrative forms for all its organizational processes including conferences and meetings. WAS will consult with local organizations and activists about the best practices to create and enabling environment by being conscious and sensitive about the way it actively creates or maintains gender segregated spaces, including the use of toilet facilities at WAS organized meetings.

C. WAS is a global entity, that can influence, but not control and hence not ensure the safety and security of trans and gender diverse persons during their official travels to and from venues, especially in geo-politico-legal contexts that criminalize or do not legally recognize trans and gender diverse identities. However, WAS commits to prepare documentation in cooperation with the individuals in question, apt to assist safe travel.

D. WAS condemns any kind of conversion or reparative therapy.

E. WAS will continue to promote research, education, and training on the specific sexual and reproductive health needs of TGD community members.

Approved by the WAS Advisory Committee on August 10, 2021