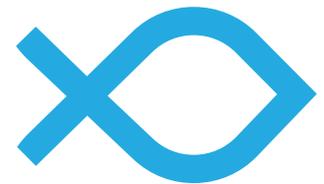


The role of churches in the context of **violence** on marginalised groups such as LGBTI peoples

**Proceedings from the meeting of Heads of churches,
project coordinators and General Secretaries
in FOCCISA, held in Johannesburg
from 29th August to 1st September 2016**



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1. Introduction to the Supplement

This *Supplement* was commissioned by the Heads of Churches, Project Coordinators and General Secretaries of FOCCISA at the conclusion of their meeting held in Johannesburg from 29 August – 1st September 2016. The theme of the meeting was “The role of the Churches in the context of violence on marginalized groups such as LGBTI people.” LGBTI is an acronym used to describe the diversity of sexual and gender minorities and stands for: L-lesbians; G-gays; B-bisexual; T-transgender; and I-Intersex. All these terms are explained in the Glossary found at the end of the Supplement on page 29.

Five (5) papers were presented at this conference. These papers/articles are discussed in this *Supplement*. At the end of the conference participants met in country groups to decide on the way forward. They committed themselves to action plans to address the plight of LGBTI in their countries. Some of the comments from these groups were: “Need training of trainers. Need to know more about LGBTI” and “God loves unconditionally. This is where to start. We are all created in the image of God. It is important to see that things are not of choice or preference. Orientation is not a choice.”

The *Supplement* is a response to the need for training. It is also a continuation of the *One Body Series* and discusses the same topics such as *Human Dignity*, *Gender-Based Violence* and *Unity of Humanity as One Body* and the *Method of Dialogue*. In addition, the topic of “*Marginalization*” will be discussed as a context for understanding the marginalization of LGBTI.

The next section will discuss the background to this meeting and the theme of marginalized groups with a particular focus on LGBTI.

2. Background to the FOCCISA Conference

The decision to have a meeting of Heads of churches, project coordinators and General Secretaries of FOCCISA, to discuss the topic “The role of the Churches in the context of marginalized groups such as LGBTI people” was taken at the Gender and HIV/AIDS coordinators meeting organized by Nordic - FOCCISA cooperation on Gender and HIV/AIDS.

This meeting took place in Johannesburg – South Africa from 11th to 12th February 2016. The aim of this meeting was to discuss in a closed forum the issue of Gender-Based Violence and violence against marginalized groups of people in church and society.

Summary of meeting

Three papers were presented at the meeting in February 2016, and these were:

- a. *African rights, Human rights and the Golden rule* by Rev. Knut Refsdal (Christian Council of Norway General Secretary)
- b. *The historical development in the understanding of human sexuality, especially related to sexual minorities in Africa and the present situation* by Lebohang Matela
- c. *How should the churches relate to the present situation for sexual minorities?* by Bishop Malusi Mpumulwana (South African Council of Churches General Secretary).

Group discussions included stories on stigma and discrimination taken from the material developed by the Nordic-FOCCISA cooperation on HIV and AIDS that is the *One Body Series*. People from the LGBTI community in the Southern African region were invited to the meeting to share their stories.

At the end of the meeting, participants expressed a strong commitment to continue the work on human rights and theology in their countries. They were also exposed to the challenges faced by LGBTI people and committed themselves to speaking out against discrimination and violence against LGBTI in their respective countries.

Comments of the participants after the meeting.

The participants felt that there was a need for dialogue about LGBTI to a larger representation of each National Christian Council particularly the Presidents and executive committee members of the Christian Councils. It was difficult for national programs in some of the National Christian Councils to take off without the support and blessing from the Presidents and members of the executive who are also the policymakers.

Recommendations for the way forward

The participants decided on the following:

- convening a meeting similar to the one that they had
- at that meeting, the main speaker would be Bishop Malusi Mpumulwana of the South African Council of Churches
- the participants should be the representatives of the National Christian Councils consisting of the President, General Secretary, a woman representative and a youth representative.

Methodology to be used in the conference

Although facilitation of the meeting will be done by different facilitators in accordance with the subjects which will be covered, the dialogue method will be used during the meeting.