

## PSYSSA DECOLONISING PSYCHOLOGY DIVISION MENTAL HEALTH STATEMENT

### *International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia*

The 17th of May marks International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, And Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). The day draws its significance from the World Health Organisation's (WHO) decision to remove homosexuality from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) by declassifying it as a mental disorder in 1990. This marked a shift in collective humanity and freedom.

IDAHOBIT, in 2026, is celebrated under the theme, "At the heart of democracy." This theme symbolizes the centrality of the role of democracy in mental health advocacy, freedom of expression, and the fundamental right to life for everyone. It comes at a time when the rights of LGBTQIA+ people face significant threats from governments, groups, and individuals. Recently, this has been worsened by the termination of the United States Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in South Africa. The termination of PEPFAR has reduced access to healthcare services such as HIV prevention and management, including Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), as well as gender-affirming care.

While South Africa leads as one of the African countries with the most progressive legislation regarding the LGBTQIA+ community, homosexuality remains criminalised in much of the continent. Despite South Africa's milestones in recognising LGBTQIA+ rights, including the Civil Union Act of 2006, gender-based violence persists in daily life. Horrific cases of corrective rape, among other forms of violence and homicide, target members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Each unresolved incident undermines the rights of LGBTQIA+ people and highlights the ongoing failures of the criminal justice system.

Whilst the psychology profession in South Africa has been at the forefront of advocacy against homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, as demonstrated by essential guiding manuals such as PsySSA's Practice Guidelines for Psychology Professionals Working with Sexually and Gender-Diverse People (2025), which seek to ensure gender discrimination does not take place within the profession and beyond, there remains a

lot of work that is to be done to address the way in which gender justice remains largely inaccessible in society at large.

What remains a key issue is how healthcare and criminal justice institutions continue to adhere to colonial gender frameworks, which further undermine gender justice, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas. As an essential part of decolonising psychology, we therefore call psychologists in clinical, educational, research, and industrial fields to move beyond the professional setting.

***There is a need to collaborate with activist organisations that bring to life the principles of gender equality, freedom of expression, and an ethics of care outlined in the guiding manual.***

**Resources:**

<https://www.psyssa.com/practice-guidelines-for-psychology-professionals-working-with-sexually-and-gender-diverse-people-2nd-ed/>

<https://anovahealth.co.za/our-work/key-populations/>

<https://www.samesamecollective.org/>