

Long Story, short (12)

What's the "i"?

"Long Story-Short" is a weekly email describing one LGBTQIA+ inclusion principle around 250 words (or less!) while demystifying some of the complexities around LGBTQIA+ inclusion in humanitarian and development environments.

i=intersex

Intersex is an umbrella term which captures the diversity of people whose bodies, reproductive and/or sexual organs do not match the binary male or female designation which they were assigned at birth. This manifests in a diversity of characteristics across all populations. These characteristics may be identifiable at birth, may only become apparent later in life, or may never be visible.

Intersex is a naturally occurring genetic process, and people who are intersex do not require medical interventions. Being intersex is not a health disorder that requires treatment, and intersex persons are not the same as transgender persons.

And yes, you have intersex colleagues. If you work in the development or humanitarian aid sector, you have programme participants who are intersex.

In an aid environment, intersex persons may need specific assistance or interventions which range across sectors, whether protection or health, education or shelter. Your teams need to have accurate, informed information to ensure that you are meeting these needs effectively, and with understanding and empathy.

Intersex persons face major human rights violations. According to OHCHR, these include infanticide, forced/coerced surgery, sexual and gender-based violence, discrimination in sports, education, employment, and lack of legal recognition and access to justice.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) estimates that [1.7% of people](#) are born with intersex traits. Statistically, this means that in a country like DRC where there are [6.2 million internally displaced persons](#) (IDMC) and [517,000 refugees](#) (UNHCR), there are *at least* 114,189 persons with intersex traits. Put differently, there were [19,800 staff working at UNHCR in 2024](#), and therefore at least 337 staff members have intersex traits. Save the Children, [with 25,000 staff globally](#), would have 425 intersex staff.

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