

Long Story, short (19): The Myth of Conversion “Therapy”

“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.

The first thing to understand is that no one needs to be “healed” or cured”

7 January is the International Day to End Conversion Therapy, which marks the 2022 law passed in Canada to ban these practices. This international advocacy day serves to honour survivors, reflect on the damage done by this abusive practice, and advocate for bans in more/all jurisdictions.

Conversion therapy refers to a broad range of forced practices to reverse, suppress, and repudiate someone’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. Frequently, forced conversion practices are targeted at children. Methods are coercive by nature, and can involve physical, mental, and even sexual abuse and violence.

But the entire premise of forced conversion practices is itself absurd: the notion that there is something to be fixed or “cured”.

There isn’t anything therapeutic about these methods at all, and they lack any medical or psychological evidence or scientific validation. These approaches have been repeatedly debunked by international and national medical, scientific, and psychiatric bodies, and a [report issued by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) has called for a worldwide ban.

What’s more, countless studies have proven that these practices simply don’t work. They can also inflict extraordinary harm to survivors’ mental health, provoke discrimination and stigmatisation, and lead to dramatic increases in suicides and suicidal ideation. Several UN committees and bodies have equated some forms of forced conversion practices to [torture](#).

Forced conversion practices are currently [banned in 25 countries and partially banned in 3 others](#). [But these practices remain legal in 160 countries](#).

Take Action

- Email, phone, or write to your MP/representative and demand bans and enforcement.
- Tag your representatives on social media and demand action.
- Post on social media to help increase understanding about the harms done.
- Submit testimony – if you are a survivor, consider submitting your experiences to support legislative bans.
- Be an Ally – let the LGBTQIA+ people in your life know that they have your support, and that they are safe and can be themselves with you.
- Report any incidents of abuse you are aware of.
- Donate to advocacy groups.



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