**Background Information**

***Call for input for report to be presented at HRC41***

To inform my report, I am seeking views and inputs from all relevant stakeholders (Member States, civil society organizations, National Human Rights Institutions, United Nations agencies, regional institutions, corporate entities, etc.) and I kindly invite you to consider the following questions:

1. What are the current efforts by States to increase their knowledge of the LGBT population? Specifically, are questions about sexual orientation and gender identity included in government surveys (e.g. the census, national health surveys, income and living condition surveys, or other surveys funded or mandated by the State), administrative records (e.g. birth certificates/birth registries, identity Cards, school records, professional licenses, social security and public benefit records, and other government documents)?
2. What kinds of data can be collected by government to understand the nature and extent of violence (e.g. through statistics on LGBT-phobic hate crimes and hate speech), discrimination, and disparities in health, education, labour, civic participation, and other important areas?
3. What safeguards are in place, and what safeguards are needed, to protect the human rights of individuals providing personal data as well as individuals collecting such data? This question includes the following:
   1. Safeguards to protect the privacy of individuals who provide data about their sexual orientation/gender identity, and the confidentiality of the data provided by these individuals.
   2. Broader statutory rules or administrative policies to insure transparency and accountability of government institutions such as statistical bodies.
4. What are the risks associated with the collection and management of data on sexual orientation and gender identity and initiatives to overcome those?
5. Are there circumstances where data collection is ill-advised, such as in countries that criminalize same-sex behavior or where particular government agencies have demonstrated a cause for concern regarding their treatment of issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity?
6. When States engage in data gathering activity, to what extent is civil society able to meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of these programs? This question includes the following:
   1. Do states have policies that guide the process of civil society participation national statistical programs and other State efforts to increase knowledge about LGBT populations?
   2. Does civil society have the capacity, in terms of expertise and technical knowledge, to meaningfully participate in State efforts to gather data?
   3. What constitutes meaningful participation in this area?
7. Does the lack of a global classification scheme carry risks that data will not be useful for international comparisons or will not accurately reflect the identities and lived realities of local populations?

**Input from GIN**

We have focused on data gathered by all stakeholders: states, institutions, academia, civil society. Data gathered on LGBTI lived realities and faith/religion is rather scarce, and what we will focus on below, is on question 2 and recommendations for the kind of data to be collected by government to understand the nature and extent of violence.

There are indeed large data gaps regarding the LGBTI community and its lived realities. There has been an increase in research – including from governments and international institutions, in the Global North – but there is still much to reveal in terms of the lived realities of the LGBTI community, in all corners of the world. One essential element which we are seeing as still missing in current research is– but not only - in terms of faith-based data. This is resulting in a lack of understanding of not only faith-based discrimination and violence but also faith-based tolerance and inclusiveness of LGBTI individuals, in different contexts around the world.

A general inclination, so far, has been to perceive religion (from most traditions) as opposed to or distinct from the LGBTI community. This has been largely influenced by a trend in secularism in the Global North, as well as the rhetoric and actions of right-wing religious groups acting at the local, regional and international levels, in all parts of the world.

We believe that deeper and more complex research regarding faith, religion and its connection to LGBTI issues would provide greater insights into understanding root causes of SSOGIE-based violence and discrimination, and potential solutions as well.

***What place does faith and religion hold in LGBTI people’s lives? What impact does faith, religion and community have in LGBTI people’s lives?***

For example, according to the censuses and surveys made in Australia, Canada, the US[[1]](#footnote-1) , the scale of faith/spirituality presence within the LGBTI community is huge (between 30% and 60% figures in these reports – this could be even greater in Global South countries). For many, religion remains a great source of emotional, psychological and spiritual support including in the face of opened violence and discrimination.

Yet, in other instances (or sometimes in parallel), religion remains a great source of hurt and self-hatred, as some members of the LGBTI community find it extremely difficult to reconcile their faith – as promoted by their family and social circles - and SOGIE identity.[[2]](#footnote-2)

But there remains a lack of understanding and complex knowledge of the place of faith within LGBTI lives and the impact on acceptance of themselves. With the intersectional nature of problems in our field, if the scale of the phenomenon remains unmeasured, we may actually lock ourselves out of some very interesting possible solutions in the future. Knowing more about the faith involvement of LGBTI community would definitely be helpful for general political advocacy and improvement of the situation of the community as a whole, not just its religious part.

***How do faith-based individuals and communities perceive LGBTI individuals?***

In light of a lack of comparable data on the respect, protection and fulfilment of the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) launched in 2012 its European Union (EU) online survey of LGBT persons’ experiences of discrimination, violence and harassment. It represents the largest EU-wide survey on the state of LGBTI violence and discrimination in this region of the world, and does include some questions regarding faith and discrimination on the basis of belonging to a religion. The results of its 2014 report[[3]](#footnote-3) indicate discrimination on the basis of being part of a religion, that some LGBTI individuals identifying as religious have been discriminated against for being religious (11%), and a desire from LGBTI individuals of faith for more acceptance by religious leaders (59% amongst the transgender respondents). Yet, we believe the survey could go even more into details (see below).

As, according to the ILGA world report “Minorities Report 2017: Attitudes to Sexual and Gender Minorities around the World”[[4]](#footnote-4), 48% of respondents agree that they can respect their religion and be accepting of people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Further, 53% of the same cohort of respondents, responded that they can be respectful of their religion and be accepting of people who dress, act or identify as one sex although they were born another. These findings are rather counter-intuitive to what is largely thought of in the LGBTI community and even policy-makers, and may open the door to some different understanding and framing of religion, faith and LGBTI issues.

Therefore, we believe that systematic data collection on people’s faith, spirituality, and how it affects, or not, their acceptance of LGBTI people, in more details, would provide huge insights into the nature and extent of violence (e.g. through statistics on LGBT-phobic hate crimes and hate speech) and discrimination, as well as possible political and social responses to right-wing discourse and policy.

**What kind of data?**

Regarding the above, and the existing research on LGBTI lived realities and faith, here would be our recommendations to states in terms of further data to be collected. In terms of questions to be asked in surveys, to complete the surveys mentioned above with the following details:

* **Ask openly about self-identification** as spiritual/religious to be able to measure how many identify as spiritual/religious
* **And about belonging** to a religion and the data should be disaggregated to show different faith traditions
* Ask openly "Do you feel that your **faith/beliefs** have been **a source of acceptance** of your own SO and/or GI/GE?" Or, to put it differently, "Is it possible to respect your faith/religion and your SO and/or GI/GE"?
* “Has your religious **community**been **a source of support**for you in accepting your SO and/or GI/GE?”

One more general angle that might involve not just the religious aspect:

* "Have you ever felt being **discriminated within the LGBTI community**because of your faith/belief / *other factors*?"

**Notes of caution:**

As we ask states and international institutions to dive further into data research and analysis, we must also keep in mind the limits of data and its implication in policy change. Data collection regarding LGBTI individuals of faith may not happen immediately in all countries of the world, including in the Global South, and we must continue to privilege types of advocacy which are context-specific and appropriate. For instance, if leaning on data and research might be very helpful in certain contexts, in others, it may be more helpful to lean on values which are anchored in those contexts (of care, support, community).

1. Kaleem, J (6th December 2017), *The Huffington Post*, “Religious Views Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender People Revealed in New Survey” URL: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/14/religious-views-lesbian-gay-survey\_n\_3442858.html?guccounter=1&guce\_referrer\_us=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\_referrer\_cs=R03IS9K95rUnGc0XJDHwAg [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Beagan, B. and Hattie, B. (April 2015), *Religion, Spirituality and LGBTQ Identity Integration*, Journal of LGBT Issues in Counselling, URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276119041\_Religion\_Spirituality\_and\_LGBTQ\_Identity\_Integration [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) “EU LGBT survey - European Union lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender survey: Main Results” URL: https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/eu-lgbt-survey-european-union-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-survey-main [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ILGA-RIWI, Minorities Report 2017: attitudes to sexual and gender minorities around the world, October 2017; URL : https://ilga.org/ilga-riwi-global-attitudes-survey [↑](#footnote-ref-4)