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Department:  
Justice and Constitutional Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## 11 December 2017 National Intersex Meeting Announcement

On Monday 11 December 2017 Iranti, in partnership with Intersex South Africa (ISSA), the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) and the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DOJ), will host a National Engagement on the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of intersex persons.

The meeting aims to address South Africa's need for human rights-based health protocols on the protection of intersex persons, and increased legal protection mechanisms to end systemic discrimination faced by intersex persons.

"The Foundation for Human Rights is excited to partner with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, Intersex South Africa and Iranti-org on the advancement and protection of the rights of intersex people. Through the Socio-Economic Justice for All Programme, the Foundation continues to work closely with vulnerable communities and government departments to ensure the full realisation of the rights of all people in South Africa," says Yasmin Sooka, Director of the Foundation for Human Rights.

"This national engagement is key as we seek to concrete commitments and actions to end the continuing human rights violations, in particular around intersex genital mutilation. We want changes to health policy and legislative protections. We want to see commitment to urgently address the issues facing the intersex community", says Joshua Sehoole, Iranti's Advocacy Manager.

We therefore hope to come away from this engagement with concrete actions and interventions by the relevant state departments and stakeholders on how they will promote and protect the human rights of intersex people, particularly with regard to legislative change and change in medical practices.

"This is an important national dialogue that brings together the Departments of Justice, Health and Social Development to address the issues facing the intersex community in a holistic manner," says Deputy Minister of Justice, John Jeffery.

Intersex persons in South Africa remain invisibilised and stigmatized in South Africa. Intersex is an umbrella used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. Intersex people are born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. "This meeting is an opportunity for real change. It's essential that at the heart of the discussions are the voices of intersex people themselves", says Babalwa Mtshawu, co-chair of Intersex South Africa.

While in rural and traditional settings, high incidents of infanticide and child abandonment remain significant challenges, in medical settings. Intersex infants further face irreversible nonconsensual cosmetic surgery across the country, also referred to as intersex genital mutilation (IGM), in clear violation of human rights. Those who only find out that they are intersex later in life often do not have access to their medical records and have little course of redress when seeking justice for inhumane medical practices performed on them.

For more information and media enquiries, please contact Kellyn Botha at [kellyn@iranti.org.za](mailto:kellyn@iranti.org.za), and make sure to join the conversation on Monday via Twitter by following @irantiorg and using the hashtag, "#IntersexRights".