SOGI'S STORY IS BASED ON RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN BY THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE (AHRCENTRE), FACULTY OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY AND COMMISSIONED BY THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE COMMONWEALTH FORUM OF NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS (CFNHRI) WITH FUNDING FROM THE AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IS PERVERSIVE ACROSS MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. ADDRESSING THIS BURDEN OF DISCRIMINATION HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A KEY ISSUE BY THE 16 AFRICAN NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY MEMBERS OF THE CFNHRI: BOTSWANA, CAMEROON, CHINA, KENYA, LESOTHO, MALAWI, MAURITIUS, NAMIBIA, NIGERIA, RWANDA, SIERRA LEONE, SOUTH AFRICA, SWAZILAND, TANZANIA, UGANDA, ZAMBIA.

SOGI'S STORY IS BASED ON MATERIAL RELEVANT TO THESE COUNTRIES. IT IS A WORK OF FICTION. NAMES, CHARACTERS, BUSINESSES, PLACES, EVENTS AND INCIDENTS ARE EITHER THE PRODUCTS OF THE AUTHOR'S IMAGINATION OR USED IN A FICTITIOUS MANNER. ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PERSONS, LIVING OR DEAD, OR ACTUAL EVENTS IS PURELY COINCIDENTIAL.

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This story is Sogi’s story. But this is also... Kojo’s story. It’s a love story.
IT BEGAN NATURALLY WITH KOJO AND SOGI.

WHEN THEY WERE VERY YOUNG.

IT WAS SIMPLE.

BUT...

AS THEY GREW...

IT SEEMED LESS SIMPLE.

BUT TO KOJO AND SOGI IT MEANT SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

TO BE IN LOVE MEANT ONE THING TO THEIR PARENTS OR THEIR FRIENDS.
Sometimes being in love made them feel good.

But other times...

It made them feel confused...

Guilty...

And worse.

Sometimes it made them feel afraid.
Sometimes Kojo and Sogi tried to ignore it. They tried to pretend that they weren't in love.

But that didn't work. It was real. It wouldn't go away.

Kojo and Sogi could be honest with each other when they were alone...

... but when others were around they had to keep pretending. They got good at pretending.
they got older...

they kept their eyes open.

they kept their ears open.

they learned

that there

were places

they could

go....

they kept their eyes open.

they kept their ears open.

they learned that there were places they could go....

places where they didn't have to pretend.
They met more people like them. All sorts of different people.

Some of them told stories...

About the things that could happen... if they let their secret slip.

Things didn't have to be this way.
SOGI found inspiration in the lives of famous people...

He said that every person in Africa had the right to love whoever they wanted. The right to feel safe. The right to be happy.

He said that we shouldn't have to keep our love a secret any more.

Maybe SOGI was right.
Sogi’s mother blamed Kojo for what happened.

Everybody knew his secret...

His parents wouldn’t talk to him, his boss said he was a criminal, he had to leave home.

Cross the border.
Now Kojo lives in a foreign place where no one knows his secret. He will have to stay away from his home for a long time...

Maybe forever.

But maybe things will change. Maybe Sogi's dream was real.

Maybe one day, years from now, Kojo will go back to his home.
Maybe people that he used to know will see him and smile? Maybe some of them... will apologise? Maybe Kojo will come across some young people. People who had the same problems that he and Soji had? But maybe things will be different for these young people? Maybe they will be open about who they love, and will be accepted as a part of the community. The end? Feel safe. Feel happy. Live a good life. Maybe.
SOGI’S STORY IS SUPPLEMENTED BY A FACTSHEET AND A SHORT VIDEO.
FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE SEE:
WWW.SOGISTORY.COM

IN MAY 2014, THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS ADOPTED A LANDMARK
RESOLUTION CONDEMNING DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY.
THE RESOLUTION CAN BE FOUND HERE:
HTTP://WWW.ACHPR.ORG/SESSIONS/55TH/RESOLUTIONS/275/

A BROAD COALITION OF AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL NGOs WELCOMED THE RESOLUTION.
THEY WROTE:

“THIS RESOLUTION IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS AFFIRMING THE EQUALITY AND DIGNITY
OF ALL AFRICAN PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TARGETED AND CONTINUE TO BE TREATED AS
SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS BECAUSE OF THEIR REAL OR PERCEIVED SEXUAL ORIENTATION
AND GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION.”