Solidarity for Violence Against Women Prevention and Response

From the 14 -16 June, 2018 the Gender Based Violence Prevention Network held a social media campaign to discuss key issues around solidarity. As part of those efforts, we held a Twitter chat with Godiva Akullo, Deputy Director of Chapter Four Uganda, a civil liberties organization working to promote human rights for all Ugandans. A summary of the conversation is shared below

GBVN: None of us is safe until all of us are safe. Let's learn how @amgodiva has practiced solidarity for social justice in Uganda in a few minutes. #SolidarityWins

GBVN: Thanks so much @amgodiva for making time to share your thoughts with us on #SolidarityWins

Can you share with us what solidarity means to you?

AG: To me, solidarity is deliberate and enthusiastic support for the well being of human beings whose issues may not always directly affect us. Solidarity exists among individuals and across movements.
In terms of solidarity with efforts to end violence against Womyn, this entails the support of men, politicians, disability rights movements, LGBTIQ movements amongst others, with the efforts of feminists and womyn’s groups that are taking the lead.

**GBVN**: Please say a bit more about deliberate and enthusiastic support? What does that look like, feel like...how do you know when you have experienced that kind of solidarity?

**AG**: Allies who condemn violence against womyn must be public and vocal about it. We must support womyn in words and in actions. Step up and defend womyn who are abused, believe womyn and say it... confront friends, relatives, politicians who are abusive!

It’s not just about private support and background cheerleading! Solidarity entails jumping in and helping out when those on the frontlines need support. And it must be focused on the expressed needs of those we are allying with!

![Image of two people holding a solidarity banner](image)

**GBVN**: True! And this is the difficult but very necessary thing that we all need to do when it comes to practicing #SolidarityWins.

You work for Chapter Four Uganda, a civil liberties organization working to promote human rights for all Ugandans. Currently, what are the pressing issues in Uganda that you would want other African human rights organisations to show solidarity on?

**AG**: Most pressing right now is the issue of the security of womyn/ all Ugandans. Womyn and children are being kidnapped and murdered at alarming rates and we are trying to hold the govt and security agencies accountable and re-affirm that #WomenLivesMatterUg We need support.
Also, the LGBTIQ movement in Uganda could use the support of allies from all over the continent in efforts to affirm the humanity of Queer Ugandans and secure the protection of the law. Especially this international pride month.

The movement for progressive laws and policies on abortion and sexual and reproductive health rights currently being led by human rights defenders and medical professionals is also addressing the serious issue of maternal mortality and deserves support!

**GBVN:** Please say more about the kind of support you need. What kind of support do you need from fellow Ugandans? What kind of support do you need from allies who may be further afield for eg?

**AG:** We need:
1. Money (carrying out direct action is not cheap)
2. Our voices to be amplified both in local and foreign media
3. More Lawyers to help bail us out when arrested
4. We need bodies at the #WomensMarchUg on the 30th June. Please show up and let’s march

**GBVN:** Tell us about your feminist journey, and what if any role solidarity has played in your life?

**AG:** Well, I came to feminism through the work of womyn like Sylvia Tamale who is an icon of solidarity. In early 2000s, she was biggest supporter of the LGBT rights movements despite how unpopular the issues were! She modeled for me what it means to stand by others.
And of course Audre Lorde reminds us that there’s no such thing as a single issue struggle. All our oppressions are connected and so we must be interested in each other’s freedom. My feminist practice is informed by this!

**GBVN:** We have so much love for Dr Sylvia Tamale too! She’s such a pioneer of the African feminist movement, and definitely a role model who practices solidarity. For you personally what has been the most difficult thing to do in terms of practising solidarity?

**AG:** Being humble and sticking to the agenda of the movements I support. It’s so easy to assume I know everything and jump in, and yet people who have been doing the work longer obviously understand what they are doing more than any ally coming in to support! I’ve especially had to learn how to sit down and listen and learn before attempting to jump in an help in my interactions with the disability rights movement in Uganda. My knowledge does not trump people’s lives experience. Being an ally is a learning process.

**GBVN:** Definitely, something for all allies to learn from. Don’t assume you know more than the movements who have been doing the work. "Being an ally is a learning process" This needs to be on a t-shirt, made into flyers... You’ve spoken about the importance of taking time to learn when supporting a movement. Are there any other tips you can share with a person/movement that may not be intimately affected by an issue but wants to show solidarity

**AG:** 1. Find out what is already being done by activists doing the work to contribute more effectively

2. Amplify the voices of those primarily affected especially if you have access that they may not have

3. Listen to the people you are supporting
GBVN: Thanks so much for your time with us today @amgodiva. Any final words before we wrap up our chat on solidarity? How can we stay up to date on the #WomensMarchUg and the other issues your work on?

AG: Just a reminder that there are no single issue struggles! Support the efforts of those around you to liberate themselves and we can all be free faster! Follow @WomensProtestUG and #WomensMarchUg for updates on the March on 30th June. Thank you for chatting with me.

Felogene Anumo (Audience): @GBVnet Great twitterchat! @amgodiva Question: How do you check your privilege when practicing solidarity? What are your recommended do's and don'ts.

AG: Self reflection is important, as well as attempting to understand the political and theoretical roots of the causes we support. Once you are conscious of the political position you occupy within any space, it's easier to work with and share space with others

Easter Achieng (Audience): When we ensure our movements are intersectional we are indefatigable. We must engage with rural women and girls and make our conversations and actions real for all of us. #SolidarityWins #EndGBV

GBVN: #SolidarityWins - Indeed there is no single issue struggle - oppressions are multilayered. Addressing them calls for diversity in approach and representation.

GBVN: Thank you so much @amgodiva for making time to chat to us today on #SolidarityWins and thank you to everybody who has been participating in this campaign. We continue our conversations tomorrow. Keep following the hashtags and sharing our graphics on #SolidarityWins
King Godiva @amgodiva · Jun 15
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Felogene Anumo @felogene
Replying to @GBVnet @amgodiva
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