



Draft Report on Final Zimbabwe CAL Conversation, 6-7 September 2018

Co-creating Conscious Learning Cultures Learning Journeys: *What works in advocacy for access to health?*

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Introduction

KP REACH is a three-year (2016-2018) Global Fund financed programme formulated by “Key Population” networks and NGOs in Southern Africa to address the higher levels of HIV infection among sex workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender people. Lesbians and other women who have sex with women were included in this grant as a “key focus group”.

Over the years of implementation, the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) has led the KP REACH Learning component of the KP REACH project. While the overall aim of the project is reduced HIV incidence and mortality among key populations in Southern Africa through improved access by key populations to HIV prevention, testing and treatment services, the learning mechanism has been particularly concerned with the role of knowledge and learning in advocacy, political action and organising, and programming.

An assumption in the implementation of this project has been that stronger networks will work more effectively with their members and partners in-country and that this in turn will strengthen the work on access to health services in the context of HIV.

In-country conversations have opened up space for critical engagement around issues that activists face in the work around access including challenging the politics of knowledge and of money, navigating scarcity whether real or artificial, individual as well as collective/communal wellness and wellbeing, and building healthy solidarities.

The KP REACH Learning mechanism has also been responsible for a number of outputs over the grant period. Documents that require sharing include:

- Southern Africa Regional Key Populations Priorities Charter, which has become the Health Charter
- Guidelines for Key Populations Engagement in Key Populations related research in Southern Africa
- Key Populations Priorities Position Paper
- Case studies

For this last edition of the conversations, it has been important that the conversations land in a place where partners felt as though the last two years of implementation had been of benefit, and that they were in a position to continue to come together for conversations and continue to work together. The Learning Journeys have had two core objectives, namely consciousness raising, and research and documentation, i.e. establishing a culture and politics of knowledge that names, recognises, affirms and builds capabilities for research that is led by marginalised groups and is rooted in their lived realities. These realities have included conversations around Institutional constraints, systemic and structural constraints, personal and interpersonal constraints and ideological constraints.

A movement building approach - centred on activists associated with the networks and members of the networks- as well as other key national stakeholders has been engaged. This has also been based on feminist and Pan-Africanist ideas and analysis, and on pan Africanist ideas about the production of knowledge using participatory methodologies. This approach has involved interrogating cultures, ideas, organising approaches, conflict and competition, the politics of money, the politics of knowledge and geopolitical landscapes and dynamics. It has also centred participation, transparency and accountability.

The focus of this last conversation was on what we as activists are doing that's working, and where we go from here.

Contents and Purpose of the CAL Conversation

Conversation agenda as shared with participants

CONVERSATION: What works in advocacy for access to health?

Date: 6-7 September, 2018

Day 1: Where have we been? [*What has been working in terms of access to health?*]

Time	Activity
0830 hrs – 0915 hrs	Meditative beginners' yoga session for wellness and restoration
0915 hrs – 0930 hrs	Tea and entering workshop space
0930 hrs – 1000 hrs	Check in, introductions and an introductory blurb feeding back on KP REACH work
1000 hrs – 1100 hrs	Conversation: what is working in access for health? <i>Sharing experiences from the field</i>
1100 hrs – 1120 hrs	HEALTH BREAK
1120 hrs – 1215 hrs	Conversation: what is not working, and why?
1215 hrs – 1300 hrs	Conversation: What lessons have we learnt/ are we carrying?
1300 hrs – 1400 hrs	LUNCH
1400 hrs – 1500 hrs	Conversation: Solidarity revisited – what is it and why do we need it?

1500 hrs – 1545 hrs	Conversation: What are the building blocks of healthy solidarity?
1545 hrs – 1600 hrs	Check out and tea

DAY 2: Where could we go [Day focussing on hope, building healthy solidarity and moving forward]

Time	Activity
0830 hrs – 0915 hrs	Meditative beginners' yoga session for wellness and restoration
0915 hrs – 0930 hrs	Tea and entering workshop space
0930 hrs – 1000 hrs	Check in, introductions and continued conversation on the building blocks of solidarity
1000 hrs – 1100 hrs	Conversation: What can we give the movement and what do we need?
1100 hrs – 1120 hrs	HEALTH BREAK
1120 hrs – 1215 hrs	Conversation: What is our changing context? (With a focus on opportunities for joint organising)
1215 hrs – 1300 hrs	Conversation: winding off and looking forward – Where can we go from here? Special focus on organising, learning, and raising consciousness Check out
1300 hrs – 1400 hrs	LUNCH

The Zimbabwe conversations focused on an analysis of what works, and has worked in advocacy for access to health with a goal to have a conversation about work on wellness and access to health, and to share how activists are building communities of care in the work they do. This methodology was based on an understanding of conversation as a critical practice and art through which understanding, consciousness, awareness and knowledge are established and sustained.

As with conversations over the last two years, the conversation engaged a movement building approach centred around strategies such as building solidarity (as a conscious and

deliberate element), addressing wellbeing of activists and human rights defenders, and strengthening organising cultures (through building relationships and managing power in processes, spaces and activities).

It was also important that while the space had a sense of completion or finality, that the partners CAL has been working with over the last two years felt as though they were better equipped for their work and that some useful tools had been shared with them. It was also crucial that they felt affirmed in their work and ability to organise together beyond the conversations.

The conversation was held at the Katswe Sistahood offices in Harare, making use of their meeting room for the meeting. Underscoring the importance of wellness practice to the process, each of the two days began with a 45-minute beginners' yoga session for wellness and restoration. Sessions were broken into no longer than an hour each, with conversation forming the centre of the methodology. It was also important that in this last conversation, activists continued to be encouraged to contribute to a culture of learning where questioning and challenging their own ways of working, approaches, strategies and methodologies and their impacts continues to be an integral part of their organising, activism and work to advance the right to access health, including health services in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Day 1, Session 1: Check in and introductions, introductory blurb feeding back on KP reach

Fewer participants (16) than the 20 where were expected attended the first day, with some being new members of the group that has been meeting over the past two years. While this meant that that there were fewer partners to work with, it also led to a more intimate environment for the space. Each participant was asked to mention their name, how they were feeling and were also given a handwritten note of affirmation about themselves. While some participants felt calm and relaxed, others stated that they felt stressed and uncertain.

Anthea then went on to give short feedback about what KP REACH has been up to since November 2017, when the group last met. She mentioned that the Health Charter was finally done and had a functioning website at www.thehealthcharter.org.za, and that CAL did not yet know what to do with the charter not that it's completed, but that it was interested in partners making use of it in advocacy campaigning and would need partners' help on how to make this possible.

She also mentioned that the Guidelines [for Key Populations Engagement in Key Populations related research in Southern Africa?] were ready and that these belonged to all the participants in the room and that she would like to have a conversation with partners about how they would like to make best use of them.

She also shared that CAL had lost its observer status at the African Commission and was currently gearing up to engage in advocacy to get it back, and also thinking about what it

meant for queer and trans people to be pushed out of the advocacy spaces that are supposed to be spaces on the continent belonging to all.

She reiterated that while this the end of the current KP REACH grant, there was a possibility of there being a KP REACH 2 which CAL would most likely not be part of, but which some of its partners might be. She also added that she was certain that CAL wanted to continue to work with participants on access to health and would stay in touch.

She mentioned that partners had been working on case studies since 2016 with the goal that activists share their expertise with CAL with regards what they are doing and what is or is not working in their work, as this is a component of engaging the politics of knowledge and of asserting that we are thinker-activists and pushing back against knowledge hierarchies. Further, this was the information that policy makers and funders needed for better health programming. At this point, she asked participants to take a look at the 'Guidelines for the Preparation of The Case Study' and thereafter have a conversation reflecting on the work they are doing and asked for input on the Guidelines, and decide whether and how they use them in their own work.

After a few minutes, the participants were asked to give their feedback on the Guidelines. The issue of resourcing of activities and programming came up quite regularly with some participants mentioning that access hasn't been realistically achievable as there hasn't been adequate naming and identification of the problem(s) to be addressed. As one participant stated, "I don't think we are naming the problem. We know the issues... but we are all scrambling for one pie and we lose our vision and go with other people's visions."

This led to a conversation around resourcing of activists' work and whether they are given enough resources to clearly state what the problem is, or if - instead - they are working haphazardly and in so doing, investing more in dealing with the effects of the problem(s), and not dealing with the problem(s) itself. Here, there was also conversation around whether activists and advocates are adequately naming and identifying the problem(s), or instead just doing whatever has funding. An important follow up to this was how activists would work in future, given that funding is certain to continue waning in the coming years.

As follow up, a participant observed that at times, problems are worsened by trying to solve them, when there hasn't been a structural analysis of the problem to begin with, or through providing incomplete solutions - for example, the same participant mentioned a situation in which food aid focusing on people on ART in a community worsened the need for food aid for people on ART because people who were not living with HIV began to get fake cards stating that they were indeed HIV positive so as to also get access to food aid, meaning there was inadequate food for those who actually were HIV positive.

The participants then reflected on whether, at times, situations were worsened by the fact that activists were using a lack of resources as an excuse and had become crippled by the need for money, and not doing it from a place of passion. It was suggested that activists need to start thinking beyond funding and put the heart back into their organising. It was unclear how to balance this desire for "heart" with the recognition that activists also need to live and to be remunerated for the value of their labour.

Another issue that came up was around vulnerability. As one participant stated, “We all know of campaigns that have flopped and yet we never have those conversations . But it’s the kind of stuff we need to learn from so we don’t keep replicating the same errors.” But the question arose around how space would be opened for such vulnerability, and for access to histories and knowledge of good and bad practices. This is where one participant mentioned that they particularly liked the idea of recognising community and emphasised that if activists were working on collective projects, they should do their best to teach others so that the skills inhere within organisations. Another participant however mentioned that one of the challenges was that visions within organisations and collectives changed so often, with many organisations changing their visions with each strategic planning meeting held. It was therefore emphasised that there was need for clearer and collective understandings of a group vision to achieve success with programming and activities.

Day 1, Session 2: Conversation: What is working for access for health? *Sharing experiences from the field*

Emphasis was placed on the following questions;

1. *What is the philosophy/ belief/ framework/ ideology underpinning the work that you do and how you do it?*

Some participants were able to respond to the question, citing a spirit of volunteerism and love of work, a belief in making contact with the community as family, and honesty, openness and passion as cornerstones of their work. Another key observation made was around the intergenerationality of the work that needs to be done, i.e. a realisation that some of the change that is being fought for in the present is not going to be for the present generation to enjoy, but rather for the next generation. Another observation was around the fact that there were many relationships - often involving power dynamics - that one had to interrogate, namely the relationship to self, to others within organisations and bottom-up relationships involving management.

However, a large part of the conversation centred on issues that continued on from the last session and which sat heavily with the participants, namely lack of ownership of narratives and space, burn out and depersonalisation of the work. As one participant stated, a grant will be written and it will only include male sex workers, for example, and when activists realise that there are serious challenges also facing female sex workers, their hands are tied to formulate strategies to serve them because programming uses “other people’s money”, that is funders’ money. The language used to describe the dynamic suggested that activists felt they had little say in relationships of power between themselves and those funding or influencing their work. This also brought up issues about whose money activists should take as certain funding would not allow them to do work that was in line with their vision, and the need on the ground. For one participant, there was a feeling that activists are working

with broken systems and that the highest need was to first change the systems, suggesting a need for a deeper structural analysis of how work is being done, and how it needs to change.

Inherent within this deeper analysis was the need for activists to have a deeper understanding of the history of the movement and how it was formed and functioned previously. As one participant mentioned, "Some of us inherited the movement from others; they suffered some stuff and now it's all about 'me' and not about the history." Another participant noted another kind of hierarchical power within the work - namely the holding of knowledge and information by certain groups or individuals in the movement who were not willing to share this with others. As the participant asked, "What do we do with these gatekeepers; gurus who have information and don't want to filter it down. It looks like every day, we are reinventing the wheel and there is no sharing of information." As another participant noted, "We forget to look back on what has worked before. We don't take lessons learnt." Another activist noted that sometimes activists were writing (donor) reports about places and scenarios they had never experienced and using historical information which may no longer be relevant. They felt that engaging with the community and getting a sense of where they were thinking was crucial to bridging the rifts of depersonalisation to the work. But again, the issues of centralisation of work in certain localities - larger cities such as Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare and Gweru - was brought up as a big impediment to reaching a larger number of communities and networks.

At this point, the facilitator circled back to what she referred to as unfinished issues and asked the participants if activists and advocates are having conversations about whether or not they are on the 'same side', and if they are having conversations relating to who they are working with in their activism and advocacy. What was discussed expanded on themes that had been discussed earlier and had brought about deep emotions of anger and frustration among some participants. As one participant stated;

"What I got into the movement seeing myself as is no longer what I see myself as. I got in and saw people who I thought were like me, with a common cause. Then I saw there were white people bringing the money and telling us what to do. It's sad to admit we are working in predetermined motions and paths. The frustration is that you come in young and get lost. I am acknowledging my lostness and questioning myself."

Another participant observed that most time and resources are spent on meeting after meeting, while yet another spoke to the industrialisation of the movement. "We are in an industry, not a movement. This conversation therefore needs to start with money because an industry starts with money," they stated. What was quite clear was that the activists felt that there was a power analysis lacking around their work, as funders and other key influencers still hold larger sway in their work, than the communities that the activists and advocates serve.

In as much as there was this greater power dynamic, there was also a need for analysis of power *within* activists' spaces and organisations. Ironically, in as much as there was a great feeling of depersonalisation of the work, there were equally sentiments shared around

personalisation of activism. As one participant mentioned, there was personalisation of the agenda of the movement where activists were working individually, as opposed to in collectives, or “celebrity activism”, as one participant called it. In other words, some activists were doing their work so that they could access to travel opportunities, per diems and shopping money, learning very little and bringing very little back to their collectives to learn from. In essence, there was a filtering down of the power dynamics that participants mentioned, but at the same time, there was a filtering up of such dynamics within activist spaces.

Another key issue that came up was around how feminists and those involved in LGBTQI work are often working against each other and therefore only enjoying short-lived successes because the basis of solidarity had not been built. As another participant noted, solidarity has often been defined as working arm in arm as brothers and sisters, but there are still many cases of activists with power to champion causes, on behalf of other activists whose issues do not necessarily directly affect them, not speaking up for them in important spaces.

“Let the owner of the story tell the story. For example, we can’t get stories from trans men about trans women.”

As such, the conversation surfaced the fact that few activist spaces are looking at oppression as systemic and all-encompassing, but rather individualising issues and solutions to these issues, not realising that the oppression of one group of people is the oppression of all, and also not taking into cognisance the need for further analysis of what working together as key populations requires in terms of understanding of other issues and collaborating towards solving them. The language of building consortia and collaborations among different groups without deeper analysis of each’s needs and perspectives on issues was also brought up.

At this point, a health break was taken, with participants returning to discuss what *was* working in their activism and advocacy.

What is working in advocacy for access to health?

Some participants shared that they felt that in terms of SRHR for key populations, there was now better visibility and voice, with prominent presence of some people in the room at important fora such as the Global Fund KP Forum where engagement around their rights was positive. An example given was that the Ministry of Health was now more open to conversations about key populations, understanding that they needed to be recognised and represented, even though there was still a long way to go in terms of conversations around lesbians and women who have sex with women, as well recognition by other ministries beyond health. Another point shared was that the advocates and activists had been loud and with that had come recognition. But it was also felt that with that recognition came a “bittersweet effect” in that the health movement and sector has now almost painted the key populations narrative as though they are “just diseased sexual beings”.

There was also sentiment that access to health services and condoms and lubricants had improved, but that there was an issue in that most organisations were not taking a holistic

approach to access for key populations. It was felt that most organisations were focusing on the biomedical side of things, such as providing ARVs and PrEP, but not doing enough around behavioural change. It was therefore felt that there was a need to combine the behavioural approach with the biomedical approach, and that organisations needed to have more conversations about behaviours and how they affect activists and lead to certain problems, for example HIV reinfection. It was, however, also noted that this was a conversation that might sound “judgy” if not handled sensitively.

Another noted success was using the broad umbrella of SRHR as an entry point into discussions that would then lead to conversations around health access. This meant looking at SRHR issues without necessarily focusing on HIV and AIDS, but rather looking at sexuality and being a sexual being, and relationships - be they long or short term - and what communities envisaged within them, which would then lead to conversations that introduced health issues.

Another success for some participants was being content to continue to work in advocacy and activists streams that they were most comfortable in, and maintaining small and manageable numbers of community members so as to still meet the need for self-care. In the same vein, another participant noted that focusing on quality of work, over quantity of numbers as per donor targets was working well for their organisation. Another thing that was deemed to be working was conversations such as the CAL conversations where people felt free and safe to say what they wanted to. Disengaging from toxic partnerships and detaching from the donor culture was another noted success.

However, it was mentioned that key populations are still not at the centre of representing their own issues especially at conferences and workshops with wide reach. One participant mentioned that activists and advocates might have a victim mentality and not be actively seeking spaces of power to speak for themselves, hence being spoken on behalf of.

A difference between advocacy and activism?

To ensure that participants were on the same page, the facilitator asked for them to define what they considered advocacy. One participant thought of advocacy as policy change, while another thought of it as lobbying for that change. Another participant stated that they felt that advocacy was different from activism in that advocacy entailed doing “proper” (or perhaps scientific) research on an issue with a community and providing bases of data and evidence, and thereafter finding feasible solutions and realistic ways to address the issues so that communities could reach where they were supposed to reach.

A follow up question from the facilitator was around what the difference between advocacy and activism therefore was. One participant stated that advocacy was “meaningful activism” done at institutional level and which entailed sitting down and finding ways to say out a whole issue. The same participant felt that activism is what is done at ground level, ie. making noise for what you want. But a follow up question from the facilitator was : *What if you don't have the data but have the lived experience and have a belief? Can you still do advocacy?* One participant felt that you can, depending on who you are advocating to

because some do not consider experience as highly influential and would prefer statistics, data and graphs. On the other hand, the same participant felt that there were other people and institutions who had respect for people's experiences.

Sometimes just opening up to clinical staff to say they were gay made a significant difference for one participant who said that as a result of opening up, the same staff had called on him to talk to the many gay patients they were receiving for services in the community. In this instance, the participant felt that they were advocating through a lived experience and personal story.

Yet another participant felt that the two worked in tandem; for while institutions like the Global Fund needed numbers, it was the stories of the people which are then packaged as case studies that triggered the emotions that the numbers elicited.

Day 1, Session 3: Conversation What lessons have we learnt/ are learning?

A lot of the lessons that the participants stated that they had learnt centred around donor-implementer relationships, NGO literacy, the challenges and successes of building alliances, and also the struggles and failures that they had experienced.

As one participant noted, while one might not be financially motivated, the reality is that there is need for finances for work to move. At the same time, there was an input that activists and advocates need to find out the cost of their work and be honest about the risks and what is entailed.

"While donors - we can say - are killing us, they give us access to resources to document certain things. At the end of the day, the work needs money."

There was also a sense that where the money is coming from is not tallying with the needs of activists, advocates and their communities and that it was important to learn to strike balances and compromises. At the same time, the participants felt that in the same way that institutions had become increasingly donor dependent, so too had the communities they served who felt a high sense of entitlement towards financial resources, even if they were getting help in the form or access to services.

Another issue that surfaced was around the fact that advocacy, by its very nature, was deemed to be a struggle in that while one might get many subscribers to a cause, there would be very few willing to 'take the bullet' in times of adversity. Another component of struggle that was raised centred around how advocacy nowadays more focuses on the youth, to the exclusion of older populations also in need of access to information and health services, as well as communities of learning and knowledge. The consequences were then that it was a struggle to teach other community members of issues when older advocates were themselves having difficulty in understanding issues. Another issue that came up was around safety from backlash for standing up and being visible and what the repercussions and ramifications for this were. Another struggle was around how some community activists receive incomplete information from higher level organisations and are tasked to do work,

without knowledge of donor targets, and are absorbing unnecessary pressure from people above them who are also getting pressure from their back donors.

A failing that was identified was around how activists are not checking in with communities' needs and are sometimes giving people what they do not need. Another failing that was identified was around how in the design of interventions, there was failure to convince people that the service being rendered was important for their health.

In terms of alliance building, one participant mentioned that there are a few alliances that have emerged that are proving to be successful in moving towards the same cause.

However, another participant mentioned that not all alliances are healthy and sometimes there is compromise and sacrifice that is, at the end of the day, not worth it.

Day 1, Session 4: Conversation: Solidarity revisited - what is it and why do we need it?

The session after lunch started with questioning around whether or not movements were needed. The question was met with various responses with some voicing reservations and others stating that they saw them as some kind of progress. One participant likened movements to giving people fish and not teaching them how to fish. In other words, they saw movements as a way of organising people around a cause without necessarily equipping them with the requisite consciousness to be able to think and make assessments of their own about work they became engaged in. It was also mentioned that the voices of grassroots organisations were often shut out within movements and that movement building often came down to issues of annual budgets and levels of capacity building where bigger organisations tended to act as Big Brother to smaller organisations. Another input had to do with the terminology used for movement building among key populations which often ironically shout out other key populations;

“When the KP terminology came, we all got bracketed into sex workers. MSM remained MSM and there was no WSW. If you group me as a sex worker, what happens to me when I have my sexual needs? You have already grouped me into a space of people I don’t necessarily share politics and ideologies with.”

Participants also brought out the issue of displacement within movements. As one participant noted, movements have become quite personalised - as was previously discussed - with certain individuals reaping the benefits of the collective effort. The participant further added that for most movements, someone (and their labour) has to be sacrificed.

Fluidity of movements was also discussed. As one participant stated, when talking about movements, it is important to go back to vision, as the core of what people are doing differs within different organisations, and this is often where conflicts come in. So rather, there should be fluidity in partnering and disintegrating when there is no longer need for unity.

Another participant opined that movements were good for building solidarity because having numbers helps to get things done.

Furthermore, it was shared that movements are continuously touted as the only way to organise, thereby creating a feeling of stagnancy. Another participants noted that there had to be an element of agency - and different forms of it at individual, organisational and collective levels - for successful movement building. "How strong your agency is will determine how strong your movement becomes," they added.

While there were mixed ideas about movement building, there were better feelings about solidarity.

In terms of agency, participants mentioned not allowing themselves to be guilt-tripped into standing in solidarity with issues they didn't stand for and setting and creating boundaries. Another participant differentiated solidarity from movements by stating that they are more fluid when it's a group of people, rather than at organisational level, as the latter involves bureaucracy. At the same time, however, they mentioned that solidarities between people were easier to break when there are disagreements. So there was a fine balance between the need for structure and the lack thereof. In this vein, it was noted by another participant that activists normally make a lot of assumptions, which lead to tension within solidarities, and that it was important to have values and write them down. Another participant felt that activists were not defining solidarity for themselves and that there was therefore a hierarchical order of its definition and understanding leading to assumptions that solidarity should be infinite, leading to a lot of stress when said people are expecting activists to do things for them all the time, sometimes even when they didn't agree with the activities or forms of solidarity building.

In essence, there was a continued assumption of shared politics, something another participant corroborated by stating that, "Sometimes, you are just forced to be there because you are a woman." Another added that it was important to know yourself and be able to express your boundaries as, for instance, some people talk about LGBTI and don't understand the TI components and therefore become a liability or toxic in spaces for TI persons. Also raised was the issue of fears of not showing up because bigger organisations might read it as not being in solidarity with with them; a comment which brought up the issue of the relationship between public relations and solidarity. As such, healthy solidarities would open up space for openness and honesty and continuous communication.

Participants were then asked to share what their solidarity looked like. Some inputs included participants offering others to organise marches, get access to media airplay, and grouping together with others who shared similar politics around patriarchy and capitalism. Participants were also asked how they are in solidarity with people they do not like. While some felt that if they were working with people they didn't like, they wouldn't be willing to bring their whole selves to the table, others felt that healthy solidarities functioned wherein friendships were separated from the work, as long as there was common and collective passion. Another issues observed was that most people don't take negative feedback well

and this can happen because we fail to differentiate work from the social and therefore don't like difficult conversations.

Day 1, Session 5: Conversation: What are building blocks of healthy solidarity?

This creative session was led by Rudo Nondo and entailed participants engaging in small group work where they had conversations about the building blocks of their solidarity; in other words, what their solidarity comprised and what they were willing to give to the movement. The activity had the following as key questions;

Key Questions:

- What are the building blocks of healthy solidarity?
- What can we give the movement and what do we need?
- Where can we go from here?

The collective block:

1. What can you achieve collectively?
2. What is the importance of honesty?
3. How do we set healthy boundaries?

Standing together:

1. What does it look like to be your brother/ sister's keeper
2. What does standing together look like?
3. What would you call this?

[NB: The session was continued into Session 1 of Day 2]

Closing circle

Most participants shared sentiments of positivity in this time, stating that they felt hopeful, replenished, informed, grateful for the space and empowered.

"I have always felt we needed to have honest conversation and today was that day."

There was also a feeling of relief shared by some participants about not feeling as though they were alone in how they had previously felt. There were, however, fears of returning to the 'real world' and the politics thereof, indicating that many of the participants did not feel that they could replicate the same openness and freedom as they had created within this safe space outside of it.

Day 2 Check-in

The day began, as with Day 1, with check-ins from the participants about how they were feeling. Many noted that they were looking forward to the day for a range of reasons; for instance, some were looking forward to looking at ways of creating a collective beyond the

KP grant, and how to work across solidarities within the LGBTQI community while navigating conflicts. Others were also looking forward to the creative session that was to be continued from the day before.

To this end, most of the first session was spent continuing with the group conversations on the building blocks of solidarity.

Day 2, Session 2: What can we give to the movement and what do we need?

The groups returned to the space to share their feedback from their work from the previous day as well as the morning session as follows;

Group 1 Feedback

The values guiding this group were transparency, compassion, freedom of expression, strong belief in freedom of choice and peace, and choice and equity.

What changes would you like to make as individuals in solidarity?

They noted the following;

1. Transparent and passionate advocacy.
2. Advocating for spaces to respect individual and group freedom of expression, that is opting in to movements versus being forced to join them.
3. Advocating for equality and good governance. They expanded on this by stating that whatever spaces they were in, or whatever actions they were taking as groups and individuals, needed to be managed correctly and with mutual respect for all.
4. Being a peacemaker through personal and group wellbeing. This was expanded to emphasise that individuals should make sure that they being looked after within themselves and within groups as well.

What sort of challenges could we face within solidarity, and how could we manage them without resources?

A challenge that was noted was that people placed personal issues or needs before the group. They felt that fixing this did not necessarily require resources but rather, open and continuous dialogue. Another challenge was working with people who either hide or ignore issues because they don't know, or want to know, what the issue is in the group, thus making the issue seem unimportant. The suggested remedy to this for activists to be more transparent and willing to learn so as to better understand each other's needs and concerns. Another issue was around people who 'speak for us without us', by choosing a group representative who then only speaks to represent their own needs or issues. A suggestion was to increase visibility for all at personal and group level. Another issue that surfaced, in tandem with the last, was around egos and personality politics impacting the movement.

The group's suggestion was to focus on promoting wellbeing of the group and for individuals to check themselves and their egos, and be more conscious of their selves.

Why do we want to work in solidarity with each other?

The participants felt that allowed them to change policy more efficiently because when in solidarity with others, lengthy processes such as policy change advocacy can be endured in solidarity with others. Another issues was around overcoming individual weaknesses (both as people and organisations) and allowing others within the solidarity to continue the fight. Another issue was that working in solidarity helps to remove stigma and discrimination which the participants felt went in tandem with increasing tolerance. Learning and understanding each other in all collective differences, as the group noted, was beneficial. Finally, they noted that it promoted active participation of all as the group dynamic encouraged those who felt voiceless and encouraged them to be more willing to stand up and speak.

Group 2 Feedback

There was a premium placed on honesty so as to know what to expect and to set real expectations with each other so as to avoid getting people saying they would do things which they are not going to do. This also meant avoiding having people who would promise solidarity they couldn't follow through on, eg. marching. If activists couldn't march they could come out directly and say they can't march and being real, as much as it might hurt the next person.

"What we are working for is the movement over individualism so if we consider feelings too much, we are going to overlook a lot of things. But if we put feelings aside and think of all of us as a collective, that is going to work better. So being honest and telling those truths will make life simpler."

It was felt that honesty helped fuel people to work without the fear of being outted in public and helped set boundaries and the maintenance of values of the movement.

What does solidarity look like to us?

The group felt that it looked like a house, because without a door or a window, a house is not complete, so a door, window, bricks, a light switch, etc were needed. "You cannot say I'm a door so I'm the whole movement. You need everything so that solidarity can happen," stated a group member.

Group 3 Feedback

Group 3 presented a bag (made of moulding clay) that represented a bag full of resources. Their first point was that they would channel more of their resources to women's needs. They would also channel most of them to LGBTQI marriage rights. They would also make a difference by channelling the funds to individual in the LGBTQI community to empower them and also channel resources towards mental health advocacy. Without resources,

however, they would still share the knowledge that they had and find ways of creating self-sustaining projects to keep the cause running.

What is the importance of honesty and healthy boundaries?

Their first point was around accountability as this creates honest solidarity. Honesty helps in creating movements that are strong and it also helps to remove toxicity. It also clarifies our mandate. If people are honest with each other, they sit at the table and discuss whatever it is that you want to achieve and have direction with anyone shipping out.

How can we be each other's keeper?

The group felt they must listen to each other when someone is sharing a story, and have time to listen and reflect on how to help each other. Also, they felt they could be each other's keeper by showing up for each other, which is in line with solidarity. By sharing knowledge and ideas, they felt that they could also help build each other's capacity. For them, working together looked like a basket of fruit where there is everything within the basket for nourishment.

Discussion on group work

After the groups had presented, Rudo checked back in with everyone to see if all were on the same page, while encouraging further honest and open conversation. The first response was that while the solidarity articulated by the groups sounded good on paper, things on the ground remained very different. It was observed that people were not being honest with each other and that there was a lot of backchat about organisations, *among* organisations, and also that there was no honesty among organisations working in the same field.

"I don't see the solidarity. I think it's all talk, but really we are not acting on it."

The conversation then brought to focus the fact that sometimes, activists and advocates want to hold people to expectations that they have not consented to and making assumptions that people owe each other their solidarity by virtue of being involved in the same kind of work. The issue that surfaced during this conversation was that activists and advocates were not having conversations about what they expected from each other, and were not developing relationships to enable such honest conversations. This brought about this issue of shared politics and ideology, which are sometimes lacking in what some tend to pass off as solidarity.

With further conversation, it became clear that these conversations - which appeared to be lacking *among* organisations - were also lacking *within* organisations and collectives. As one participant noted, an organisation may have a vision and mission, but members of it may have never sat down to discuss the politics of the vision and mission, which then leads to multiple and sometimes frictional understandings of the politics of the work at hand.

"Because it [talking about the politics of the vision and mission of an organisation] doesn't have something that can fit an indicator tick box, or something a donor will fund, it's not seen as that important."

Another issue that was brought up was that as a community, there was still a lot of stigmatisation.

“The gays think they are better than the lesbians. The lesbians think they are their own crew. I have actually heard someone saying chiTrans kaform kekupenga¹. Then we have others saying no to having sex workers in the space. All these people - we are in the same movement and yet we think no, I’m a better leper than that one or that one. Definitely, if we don’t solve these issues, we are not going anywhere.”

The issue of consciousness raising therefore came up as imperative to navigate and promote.

Day 2, Session 3: Vision Boarding

Rudo further led the participants through a session on vision boarding which was a practical exercise during which each participant was tasked with producing an individual vision board visually representing what they wanted for their lives, not just pertaining to their work - but political in all aspects of their lives. As some participants were not clear on how these worked, she explained that it was a process of visualising the future that they wanted personally, as well as in their work, and also how they wanted to feel. She further explained that the vision board was personal to each participant and did not need to be shared publicly, and was especially useful in times when participants were feeling low and discouraged in their work and needed motivation to persevere.

This brought a visualisation element to the work which helped the participants both within and removed from their work; a ploy that has been successfully used in various sectors to take people out of their current circumstance(s) and into what they desired for their futures. Participants were supplied with pieces of card, marker pens, glue, scissors and magazines to cut out whatever images they could find that spoke to them and stick them to their vision boards.

Participants were also asked to fill another piece of paper where they would write down how they wanted to feel in their work as a sort of referral point for the times when they were feeling low or discouraged; a sort of accountability to self. These notes were personal to each participant and were for them to keep somewhere safe for after the conversations. As Rudo advised, it was something that the participants should have on them all the time - such as in their wallet or purse - that when they feeling overwhelmed, they could easily refer back to them. How you would like to feel; the idea being that you want to continually remind yourself of how you want to feel and if the things you are doing are aligned with that feeling. After both activities, all participants’ vision boards would be put together to provide a collective idea of the different visions the participants had for themselves and the movement.

¹ a type of madness

Day 2, Session 4: Closing Circle

The session and meeting came to an end with participants being asked to express what they were going to contribute going forward within their movements and solidarities. It was agreed that contributions would be voluntary with the express understanding that activists aren't and shouldn't be martyrs and that there was no entitlement to anyone's labour and that instead it was offered. As such, the question, became more: "When you are in a good place, what are you willing to offer?"

Below is a summary of how the different activists and advocates responded:

1. First, growth of self in all aspects in terms of wellness in my mental capacity, my advocacy skills. I need to grow myself so I can be able to continuously give back. And for me, being my sister's and brother's keeper looks like being a safe space. Being someone they can confide in. So I look to wellness a lot when I do my work and I would like to continue looking to wellness. If I am well, I can be well for another person and they can be well for another person.
2. I have felt - looking at my own experiences as a person - in terms of mental health. It's a really big issue and as activists and as advocates, we haven't been looking at it, and taking care of ourselves mentally. We become very toxic for each other. I think what I would bring to the table is greater awareness of our mental health. Let's create dialogue and space for wellness because I feel we have been burning out and we end up really affecting the next person because we are not mentally stable and not in an okay space. That also drags the community. I'll preach the word of mental health and wellness.
3. Firstly, I would work towards rebranding myself and asking what is it that I want to achieve. What is it that I want to improve within me? Also reiterating mental health and how if you are upright in the mind you will have a better way of approaching issues and you become a better person to help the next person because you are in line with the things that are affecting you.
4. For me I want to start in the house where the people I work with. I want to start holding my bosses accountable. I feel like it's time to be blunt and not just take shit because even if the line of thought is illogical, you just say "Yes boss". I am feeling very aggressive. I feel like it's time to be honest and strike a balance. And I think from there, then I can try and reach out. Because if I can't, within where I am, I honestly can't promise to speak out beyond the office and talk to other people. So I feel like for now, you can hold me accountable and come and ask if I have done anything radical within my working space.
5. I would want to do more work with individuals who are interested in getting into what we theatre people like to call the liminal space. So the liminal space is kind of that place where the mind is in between what was and what is next. It is within that space where you can really ignite your creativity. It's an exciting space to be in as an

activist or whatever that is you are. I would like to do more in terms of using writing as a low-cost, easily accessible and versatile form of therapy.

6. I think what I can bring to the table right now is myself. I am going to be open. I am willing to learn. I am willing to teach. But at the same time as I am open, please understand that I am human. I will try to understand who you are and how you work. If we are getting along, we will go together. If not, then so be it.
7. What I will offer is a culture for people to have access to knowledge and information about KP needs. Everyone should know about SRHR. Information should be distributed. I will make myself accountable on the basis that whenever there is a coalition I am involved with, I make sure that everyone who is there should have enough information that is on the agenda and have enough time to research.
8. I think I am offering myself, my time. I am willing to seek knowledge, share information, willing to learn the whole of the alphabet of LGBTQIA and make sure that what I have learnt cascades down to the people I have contact with.
9. I think that as activists the need for wellbeing is sorely missing. If you do need somebody to talk to about any issue, and for it to be kept secret. If you want someone to talk to as an activist, a companion on this journey, that is my personal contribution. As a long term ambition that I've had, maybe from end of next year onwards, is to create spaces like this but spaces where I know there is a lot of conflict that will come out. And what I'd like to do - and it's a vision that I think I have shared with one or two people before that I am trying to do now - is to be able to create a space for wellness and dialogue among activists; not for us to sing kumbaya and hold hands but to say what we are really feeling. It's a long term goal of mine. Hold me to that in the next 2-3 years.
10. I am available when I am available. I really don't have cast in stone times. Why I am saying I am available is I feel there is a lot to contribute towards the movement that I can't name or pick. But my passion really is to be part of a process that improves people's situations in life, their rights, how people see them, how they are viewed in society, how they feel about themselves. That's what I am passionate about. One issue that I would really like to contribute towards, especially with individuals, is conversations around making people feel good about themselves because I think working in a movement, or working for a group of people with group expectations, we tend to be under pressure to fill certain frames, to satisfy certain expectations, we burn out, we lose focus.
11. I think for me, I am tired, really really tired. I've been there done that. I've seen a lot. I've experienced a lot from where I've come from and where I am. And I have decided that I am slowing down in terms of actual activities. So to the movement, I will not bring anything. But what I will do, and do best, is that I will manage the conflicts. For conflict management and resolution - come to me. Also, I am a counsellor and psychologist by profession. So come to me, I'll talk to you. Individually, not at organisational level. Conflict at organisational level, I can do that.

But at individual level, one-on-one, you are more than welcome. Give me a call, I will talk to you. I am actually opening a counselling centre. So you are most welcome. You are my first clients.

12. I would want to be a role model. When I first got to know of my sexual identity, when I got to the place I thought was the place to meet people like me, what I saw there wasn't very appealing and that almost made me never return. I can also bring wisdom about financial stability and business acumen to avoid lesbian women having to marry men to stay economically stable. I would also want to contribute to behaviour change in my community as much as I can.
13. What I would like to do from now is be honest with myself and people around me. I had a situation that happened to a friend of mine. Some years back we went and got tested together [for HIV]. And she tested positive. So I tried to convince her to get on ART but she said no. So I kind of feel that I wasn't honest with her about what I really felt she needed to do as a friend and sort of delayed the whole process of her accepting she was positive and she needed to do something about it and take care of herself better. So from that I learnt I need to be more open about exactly what I feel and verbalise it; say it as it is. Because sometimes we tend to sugarcoat things and say them in the nicest way. But I think now I have realised it's better to hurt someone by telling them the truth than to let them live a lie. So I will try and be more honest in everything that I do. And in my work I will give more of my time.
14. I can contribute thinking. I like to think; my work is thinking. If you need to think through something or are trying to refine an analysis, I am the person. I will be frank but I won't be cruel. And I can contribute my frankness. I can also contribute a laugh; you know when you've been kicked by work. I can contribute a laugh and a meal.

The session was a final space for vulnerability among the participants, with each offering a range of diverse and unique attributes to continue to hold the space, as we all replenish and grow it. Most importantly, it offered an opportunity for honesty about what each participant could opt into, without the pressures of speaking on behalf of their organisations, but simply as individuals invested in building stronger and sustainable solidarities.

M and E in the Space

The participant feedback surveys were completed at the end of the second day, just before checking out and breaking for lunch. At this point, two participants had already stepped out of the space, and two other participants did not submit their forms. The information in this section is based off of 11 participant surveys submitted, with the exception of item nine where one participant declined to answer the question. All percentages have been rounded up to one decimal point.

Items listed on the participant feedback survey	% Strongly disagree	% Disagree	% Neither agree or disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
1. Overall organisation of workshop was well done	9.1			27.3	63.6
2. The space was valuable/ meaningful towards further developing my participation and analysis	9.1			18.2	72.7
3. There was adequate time provided for questions and discussion	9.1			54.5	36.4
4. Participation and interaction were encouraged	9.1			9.1	81.8
5. The mode of delivery and methodology was good	9.1			27.3	63.6
6. The presenters were knowledgeable and accessible	9.1				90.9
7. The materials distributed were pertinent and useful		9.1		27.3	63.6
8. The overall structure of the Conversations supported the wellbeing of the participants	9.1			18.2	72.7
9. The workshop's structure reflected CAL's feminist mission				20.0	80.0

In terms of quantitative responses on the participant feedback form most answers are clustered within Agree-Strongly Agree. There is a continuous outlier in the feedback with one participant or 9.1% generally responding "Strongly disagree" to listed items. In looking through the rest of this participant's feedback form, they provide positive responses to the qualitative questions and do not provide any further comments to question 14.

As regards the qualitative questions, the responses were as follows:

10. What was most impactful for you as a participant (PERSONAL level)?

- Being able to express myself freely
- N/A
- What we can do without resources and how to become a part of a movement
- Honesty and sharing
- The time we interacted, got new ideas which made me realise, I'm a visionary guy who needs to learn more
- The issue of solidarity and the strategies that I learnt about
- Open conversations
- Communion
- The group presentation
- Use of the creative methods and group work to elicit deeper reflection
- Discussion on what works and what doesn't work

11. What is the most useful takeaway for your ORGANISATION?

- Be honest, disseminate and
- The need for deeper conversations on solidarity
- Going back to visit what the movement is about
- Clearer articulation of our vision
- Self care
- That solidarity is key in building movements
- The solidarity lesson – being there for each other
- Positive vibes
- What we can do with/ without resources. What works.
- Importance of solidarity
- Realising that in everything I do, I am an individual who has personal goals that need that I need to achieve. The organisation may go but I remain as me!!!

12. How will the Conversation impact/ benefit the MOVEMENT in your country?

- Change the mindset and have realised I can't do everything [and need to] tap into other people for growing the movement
- Honestly that is yet to be determined but it will definitely make me a better advocate
- Opened dialogues
- It will help us further our advocacy for LGBTIQ rights
- It made it clear that we need to work together even if we are not friends
- Healthy boundaries in solidarity
- Understanding what it is we are doing as a collective
- It will be a building block for how we can best structure our movement
- It will allow me to create open space within the movement
- Break barriers

13. Please state your intentions of sharing your learnings

What will you share?	With whom?	How?
Interrogate the issues that are difficult to talk about	With other women	Creating spaces to network and be ourselves
Everything talked about	Everyone around me	By having conversations
Message on solidarity	My organisation	Through conversation
Values	Community	Wherever I am
Yoga	Family	Do it at home
Mental health information	My immediate mates	By having dialogues
Solidarity strategies	My organisation	Through my report
Positivity	My organisation	Through meetings
How to have open conversations	Other activists	By continuing the process and keeping in touch
Mental wellness	The movement	Writers' Café
Everything	The org I come from and members	Will do a report and group discussion
Myself	All activists and advocates	Spreading awareness of my availability

My vision	All activists and advocates	Creating a space for open dialogue in two years' time
Everything	Everyone I interact with	Dialogues

Question 14 asked for any other comments (on the process, content, venue, organisation etc), and it was answered by very few of the participants. This is possible because there wasn't much space on the survey and they didn't want to make use of the accompanying blank sheet of paper. The responses that were received were as follows:

- I pray that such meetings be done regularly to keep each other in touch
- Very flexible process
- I'm sad and happy at the same time that we've reached the end of this journey

The final question asked participants to indicate their age range, one of the participants ticked multiple boxes and it so it is unclear which range they belong to. Of the remaining 10 surveys, 20% of participants were over 45, 20% of participants were 18-25, and 60% were in the 26-35 age range.

Conclusion

The meeting brought up a range of issues that activists were very keen to be open and honest about and surfaced a range of recurrent themes around power dynamics within organisations and especially with funders and donors. What was also pertinent was that collective visioning and drawing up of mission statements for organisations had to become more politicised so that collectives managed to keep their cohesion, focus and direction. What was also interesting to note was the differences in understanding among the participants of acts of advocacy and activism, and the concepts of solidarity and movement building; and how these affected ideas around the building of collective action.

What was also clear was that for solidarity to be most effective, it had to be an opt-in process, rather than something that was demanded as a payment for for being in a movement or similar activist space or situation. Another theme that constantly came up was around lack of honesty and a lack of ability to be vulnerable in spaces for fear of the the repercussions thereof.