

SASA! A UNIFYING TOOL AMIDST SOCIAL CHALLENGES AND COVID-19 THREAT

“*The greatness of a community is most accurately
measured by the compassionate actions of its members*”
Coretta Scott King



In the face of political uncertainty and division, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, unity can be a difficult achievement. Social issues impacting relationship challenges, tend to be exacerbated during such precarious times, further polarising a population. Therefore, individuals

from all backgrounds and ages are not immune to the disruptive effects that stem from the political and social climate in Uganda—SASA! Activists from Katwe II in Kampala are not an exception. This story highlights the challenges that our team of activists have overcome, and their subsequent successes. COVID-19 has been one of the primary challenges for the CEDOVIP SASA! activists from

the Byuuma, Taawo, Kiganda, Central, and West zones in the Makindye division. Some were displaced from their residential homes due to the inability of paying rent as a result of lost employment and had to relocate in order to survive, faced financial uncertainty, and suffered from health-related losses and complications. This peak occurred during Uganda's time of political transition



between October 2020 and January 2021, which sparked conversation on their political standing and support system. With an already fragile and emotional foundation, this led to a variety of misunderstandings, discriminatory actions, and hostility within what used to be strong friendships and partnerships. They became suspicious of one another, did not support each other's political endeavours, and accusations of betrayal arose in combination with a sense of mistrust. They were faced with two options: to drift apart or come together and understand one another's point of view. Through this process, not only did they delve deeper into learning past their surface level preferences, but they realised that their differences could bring them together, with a stronger bond. During such difficult times, they needed their support and respect more than ever. The SASA! Activists looked within themselves and reflected on the core SASA! values. They felt compelled to use their combined power to create positive changes in their own lives and that of others—they

therefore nurtured and promoted mutual respect, effective communication, and healthy relationships that prioritised caring for each other's feelings. They decided that they would agree to disagree in a humble and non-violent manner, even when they may take different paths. When the odds were against them, they pushed through their differences and supported one another as a family. SASA! provides for them an identity that prompts them to question their own use of power, thus enabling them to personally connect with issues of injustice and the urgent need to place social justice work above other competing priorities. This has resulted in SASA! being a positive binding factor that empowers individuals to work for those who may be feeling powerless or lacking power (marginalised or disenfranchised people), in terms of preventing violence against women and girls. SASA! Activists have always led by example, promoting non-violence and instead, demonstrating how to address deep rooted social problems in a benefits-based way that is

empowering and fair to all. Senga Sana Hadijja, from the Katwe II Byuma zone, stated that: “we need to continue working past our political differences and work towards continuing VAW/G prevention, it’s true that we are hurting based on who did and who did not support each other’s aspirations. SASA! has always echoed the need for respect and effective communication and as such, we need to remember what grounds us and that is activism.” In this success story, the activists reminded themselves that no matter the external influence, they could ground themselves in the SASA! values to ensure that violence against women and girl’s prevention would go on. Despite what could have been a disruptive storm, SASA!’s core set of values have enabled the activists to stand the test of time in the continuation of VAWG prevention. CEDOVIP is incredibly proud of the activists as they have surpassed their differences and came out stronger, having learned a new lesson. We are very excited for the future of this community and team! United we stand, divided we fall.