

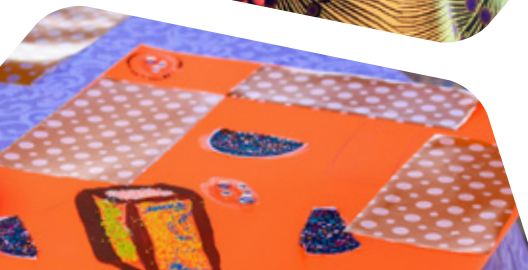


Village Runner

2nd Edition

April 2021

2020 Moments







CELEBRATING TWO YEARS OF BONDING AND BUILDING!

Jacqueline Asimwe

Welcome to the second anniversary issue of The Village Runner. The Village Runner gets its name from the Chakra Village, which consists of the first ever retreat cohort under the CivSource run, executive leaders' retreats. After that first retreat in January 2019, the participants of that retreat decided to continue their journey together, learning from and supporting each other as leaders. We decided to use the image of a village, to describe what we were and how we would co-exist. Indeed, we have endeavored to be a village for and to each other. This was on sharp display during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. We sought each other out, connected virtually, listened to, and cried with each other. We celebrated our wins, spoke through our stresses, supported each other's work, and kept the flame of love burning.

Indeed, our enduring goal as the village is to show what support among leaders looks like. We want to show what authentic leadership looks like. We want to create a space of safety, acceptance, and inclusion.

And so, we call ourselves a village. We meet as a village. We work together as a village. And one day, our dream is to build an actual village – read Elliot's article to know her vision of what this village can be.

In 2020, while the world went through a pandemic, as leaders, we battled uncertainty, we questioned our capacity to lead not just our teams, but ourselves. We discovered new things about ourselves. We contended with vulnerability. We fought many battles against discouragement. We learned how to lead in a VUCA (Volatile. Uncertain. Complex. Ambiguous) world.

Was it perfect? No. Were we perfect? By no means! But we still want to share our stories, stories of the village. We want to leave a legacy of leaders who dared, despite the odds.

Sit around the fire with us, and hear us tell our tales.....

Karibu!

**The true test
of leadership
is how well you
function in a
crisis.**

— Brian Tracy





WHEN YOU ARE THE VULNERABLE ONE

Winfred Ngabiirwe

The year 2020 is hard for me to describe, using leadership lenses. Because I think it's a year in which, while I head a civil society organization - Global Rights Alert, I am not sure I played my leadership role. Not as I understood it. Yet, we have managed to pull through and survive, up until now. At the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, I was nervous.

At a professional level and as an individual, my mind raced between the organization and family. Where were my energies needed? What energies were needed if at all, and did I possess any? Did we/ I have resources? It all seemed like No. No. No. I panicked.

I chose to listen to my workmates on how to go about the lockdown. I was lucky that Global Rights Alert had donors that were flexible and so easily appreciated our need for investing in basic infrastructure that enabled working remotely. My colleagues were glad to accept hosting and chairing check in

meetings (to be honest, I dreaded them at first because I wondered what I would tell my staff). These meetings changed my perception of the colleagues I worked with. The attendance was highest (than physical meetings we always had) and addressed very important aspects we rarely focused on. The spirit of 'how do we survive this together' was very visible. And so I began seeing so many leaders within my team.

Around the same time, I attended an online Master Class course on Leadership Agility for Organizational Resilience and got many insights on leading by being led. The course enabled me to see my vulnerability as a natural thing to have and embrace, and to see my team as capable. This crisis has challenged my view about growing sustainable agencies. In my typical "let me see how to save the vulnerable" mood, I volunteered to speak to our volunteers who come from villages and communities in which Global Rights Alert works.



To my surprise, our volunteers were asking How they could be helpful to GRA to enable us sail through the storm! Again, I was the vulnerable here and I chose to accept help. Some of them sent me food. This is my most humbling experience to date. I have over the months questioned the narrative I have known and spread about leadership and how change happens. I am questioning my role at GRA and testing out whether I am actually happy being led or the "leader". I also think a lot on whether I have given my workmates a chance to exercise their leadership call, and I am beginning to see that transiting from Global Rights Alert may after all not be that painful as I had feared.

The crisis taught me about sisterhood and togetherness. The Chakra village for example provided space where we shared and supported each other as we lead. In my view, the village enabled us to speak about the personal/professional challenges that many of us could not share with our workmates. And honestly, that helped. Because you see, you are one and the same.

If you are struggling with teaching children some curriculum that you no longer think is relevant, you are likely to see how pathetic some manuals/guidelines and templates you use at office are outdated!

How much do we know about ourselves as leaders? What assumptions do we have about ourselves and the people we lead? Do we hold any biases and how do these biases allow or disable us from adapting to change? Because change must happen. It already has. And so, if we are to survive as well as the institutions we lead, we must be like children - be unafraid, be curious, authentic and allow our creative selves to manifest.

I have seen young people use their time during the crisis to think creatively and provide leadership, in business, civil society organizations or home settings. I hope their space is protected. I pray that we shall continue to talk about the leadership holistically and honestly, so that we can thrive at it whether in a crisis or not.



A BEAUTIFUL SET UP!

Eva Kasasa

When I attended the 2019 retreat as a photographer, I didn't know that my life would change forever in a good way. I didn't think I was getting a family!
I was set up!

Since the retreat, I think I have thrived in the heart and throat chakra. I feel like my relationships have grown. I'm able to express myself even better.

One of the lessons I have learned is to lead well. Sua employs a lovely lady. A few days ago, her mother called and thanked me for being a nice person to her daughter. She thanked me for loving on her daughter well. To me, that was a win right there. So I just want the world to know that whatever CivSource birthed in Jan 2019 is working. The results are evident.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, I launched a clothing line called Sua. The support that comes from the Village is blows me away. Their support has pushed me to become better each day. I have received orders for clothes and failed sometimes, but guess what? The village mates still cheer me on. They will still place another order and remind me it gets better with time. I have grown.

I remember a particular day, Esther Kalenzi wanted me to make outfits for her; she had brought me her fabric. I was so scared. She was going to be my first customer. I remember shaking as I took her measurements. I was scared! She didn't judge me. She also

mentioned that I should take my time to make the two tops she wanted. A month later, I got the confidence to make Esther's tops. I had to first make the same top for myself using my fabric to ensure I was doing the right thing. I recently took her measurements for more outfits, more confident than I was the last time I was at it. Isn't God awesome? She gave me another chance. She believes I'm good at this, and she's cheering me on. She goes ahead to challenge me by placing orders whenever she's able to. Thanks to CivSource for the 2019 Retreat. Where would I have met such good people?

Our relationships are becoming even more substantial. We are winning together. I'm blessed to be part of these great world changers.

I'm challenging myself to be the kind of employer I never got to have or experience when employed. I hope and pray that whoever goes through Sua hands will be changed forever. Spiritually, that they will be a people of faith and grow in the knowledge of God. Socially, they will break free of whatever has been holding them back to break out and also that they will be wiser than they came.

I'm forever grateful to God for the Village.

Long Live Civsource
Long live the Village
Long live Mopane



CHAKRA VILLAGE IS AGIFT

Elliot Orizaarwa Tumwijukye

Chakra village is a gift that I am grateful for. Before the Lakeside Escape retreat in 2019, I was a leader though not impactful or responsive. I led without a soul. My spirit, body and soul were never connected. I have learnt a lot since the retreat and the times I have met with other village mates. This makes me celebrate the village. I have changed my leadership styles. I have fought fear because of growing self-love and healing talks. Given the level of socialization that was part of me, I never allowed the self to come out effectively for learning and unlearning. Bu now, I am different.

I celebrate being part of this village because of many changes that I have registered individually and with the people I lead. I have opened space for my partners to lead and manage the day-to-day running of the organization even when I am away.

This village empowered me to lead even in the time of crisis. I have managed to align the team focus, establish new measures, monitor performance, and create a culture of self-accountability. Self-awareness has also helped me lead in crisis and I have helped others to build their self-awareness.

I have a lot to celebrate and should

not forget about the culture of giving to those who do not have. I gave food and other household equipment during COVID-19 lock down. I gave food rations worth two months, to 15 families. This type of generosity has helped me and the organization to receive from development partners. We have learnt fundraising and this makes us celebrate the village where members have come to help and recommend other funders. We are grateful to Chakra Village

My leadership hopes and dreams are to continue believing in myself, dream with the village mates to build the leadership village institute where girls and women will learn and heal. I believe in self-development and would like to see the village with an investment club where each member owns a home in the village.

Leadership is a journey that needs sensitive partners who understands character and attitude changes. Being part of this village helps us to learn this and keeps us learning and unlearning. Me and Women and Girl child development association (WEGCDA) will continue learning and go on to transform other girls and women in our constituencies. We are grateful to the village and the leadership. We grow together.

MY SHORT STORY

Ssenfuka Joanita Warry

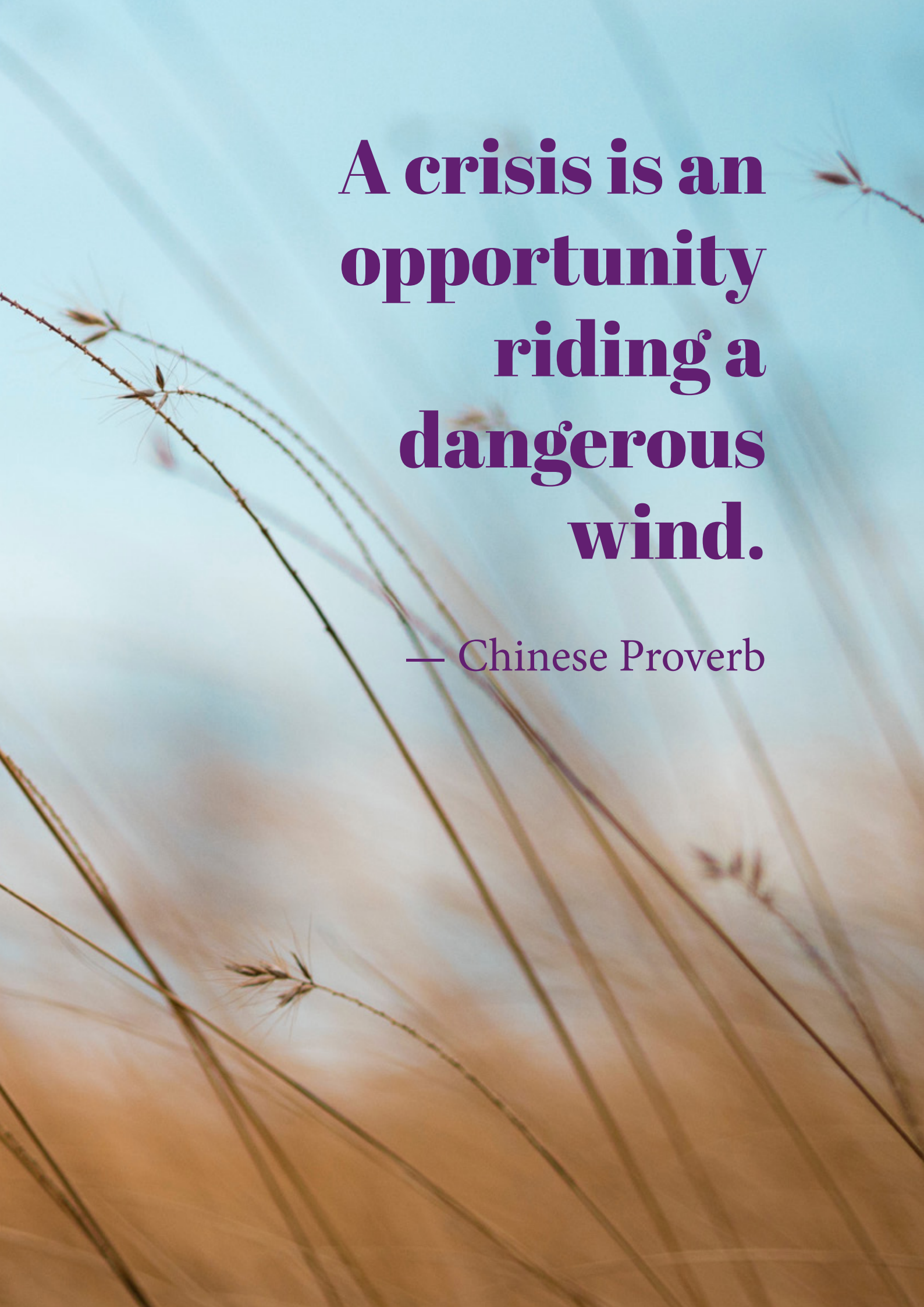
It's been a year now ever since Uganda put in place a total lockdown as a preventative measure to control the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic tested organizational sustainability and leadership as it affected programming, funding, implementation and service delivery. Despite the challenges faced, we rethought how we work and here we are now; thriving, growing and progressing.

My experience in village and master class on leadership agility for organizational resilience strengthened me as a leader to respond especially during crisis brought about by COVID-19 and the political unrest. Because of the type of leader I have evolved into, a lot has changed from within and beyond (Organizational; currently registering the organization I

lead as an NGO, started complying with statutory obligations, increased funding, increased staff base, carried out appraisals for the first time, started implementing a new strategic plan, strengthened and built new partnerships, started a podcast as a safe online space for LBQ women to share their realities. Self; accountable to myself and to the organization, drew from the chakra well to start a saving scheme, started my journey to writing so I can share from the richness of the knowledge

I possess, currently mentoring 5 LBQ young activist in feminist leadership and organizational management, prioritizing wellness and self care for myself and the people that surround me. I look forward to growing and learning as I build myself and others.





**A crisis is an
opportunity
riding a
dangerous
wind.**

— Chinese Proverb

JOURNEYING THROUGH MY VILLAGE

Jackee Budesta Batanda

The Chakrah Village showed its potential and power to me over the last year. While we had met and journeyed together since 2019, our connections in 2020 were the most real and vulnerable. We were living in unprecedented times and did not know how we would survive through the pandemic. It would have been normal for the group to disintegrate and each leader struggle on their own, but we purposed to keep strong.

We kept on having our regular gatherings despite the nationwide lockdowns that had been instituted in the country. We harnessed the power of online spaces to keep the connection. Those check-in meetings were important to me. They helped keep me afloat and to appreciate the gift of the different leaders in this gathering.

Through those meetings, I was cheered on and learnt to cheer the other leaders as they made great strides in their journey. It was a time of highs and lows but what stood out for me was the power we had a strong wall of support to each other.

During the year several of our members had heartbreaking losses. It was hard. One did not know how to console them as they mourned their loved one. We reached out through phone calls, texts, and home visits. Our own way of saying: we hear you. We feel for you. We are with you.

It was also the year I hosted the village to the Blue Marble, a writing sanctuary, I had talked about when I attended the leaders retreat January 2019. So bringing them to share and warm my space eighteen months later was a special moment for me. It was my way of opening my space to these group of changemakers. And in Chakrah village style, the villagers showed up in good numbers. We shared our stories, exchanged ideas and tips. It was an afternoon of good vibes and helpless laughter. But of all, an afternoon of encouragement and inspiration. It was a good space where people celebrate with you in your beautiful moments and cheer you on.

The village is made up of leaders who hold your hand, support you in the good times, and hold you to their bosom in the bad times. It is a space that challenges you. Makes you purpose to do better. Be better. Be grateful for everything you have. Makes you give more. Pray more.

The world needs safe spaces. The Chakra village is one of the few spaces that exist for just that purpose. I am grateful to belong to space where you are accepted with your flaws and perfections. No judgement passed. Where love does its rounds and make you grow.

This was my year of learning and growth so I am able to serve others better and many of the lesson I have picked have come through the village.





CHAKRA VILLAGE- HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Hope Nankunda

It's Two Years already since the Chakra Village was established and its extremely exciting to be one of the Pioneer Women Leaders therein. Sharing my 2-year experience brings me so much joy and peace especially in reference to how I have benefitted from being part of the Village. When I shared my 1st year Anniversary story early last year, I said that the Chakra Village is a place to call HOME in Civil Society. This feeling hasn't changed even a bit.

Sisterhood All through including the Lockdown Season.

In March 2020 when the lockdown was announced and everyone asked to stay in their homes to prevent the spread of Covid19, so much happened that caused panic and tension among families and individuals. The closure of schools meant having Children at home for a much longer time than ever before. This called for home schooling which wasn't easy at all especially with children in different classes. There was need to connect with other

parents to see how they are coping and share experiences and draw motivation. This I found only within Chakra Village where we kept contact and offered support to each other throughout the lockdown. It was powerful. I will always remember this and appreciate the need to always keep in touch and offer support to fellow village mates because at some moment, we all need such spaces.

Every time we had a check-in call during the lockdown, I was sure I would benefit a lot from the sharing of my fellow Women Leaders. With them I shared my challenges especially in regard to my work with girls. How it was not possible for me to reach them no matter how much they needed me. The calls I received from young girls that were facing abuse at home and needed my help. Through this wonderful Village, I would share my pain and make some referrals to some of the ladies who helped so much. I also offered online psychosocial support to the girls that kept reaching out to me. Am hoping it was helpful but

guess what I was drawing energy from this space. Remember we can give what we don't have.

Sharing the good and the bad and the ugly is what we do here and its okay. We support each other to grow and become better versions of self. This is one great thing I Love about this Village. Thank You for always being there for each other. When everything else seems to fail, I count on this because We lift each other's spirits and its Lovely.

The Retreats

Yes, these create more meaning and a sense of belonging. Am sending so much Love and gratitude to all members that have hosted us in their homes in the last two years. May you be blessed endlessly. You opened your lovely homes to us and made us feel as part of your family. You introduced me to your people and made me feel loved and accepted without question. I can never take that for granted because it means so much to me and it brings out the best of me. Our RETREATS give us space to breath and refill our cups.

Women Leaders are human beings who many times spend their time making other people feel comfortable without thinking about themselves. In this space we create time for us and appreciate ourselves for who we are and what we have been able to achieve. This makes all the difference as we celebrate those small wins that the world may never appreciate about us. I have found this and so much more in Chakra Village – Our Village.



We value listening to each other which makes it possible to appreciate who we are and share feedback in an organized setting. This is powerful and motivational. It enables us to understand each other better and know where exactly one needs more support going forward. It's a space where one will never feel judged but instead accepted for who they are. In our different ways we are making a significant difference.

We support each other in so many different ways especially in regards to what we do in our specific organizations. This makes all the difference as we share available opportunities that can enable us to get to another level. The positive energy to bring to each other will build us and make us stronger day after day, year after year.

I appreciate you Jackie Asimwe for giving birth to this space and nurturing it to keep getting better and better as days go by. You are such an inspiration to me and to many others out there. You bring out the best in everyone and continue to make this world a better place: I am a New Me ever since I joined this space and started caring more about myself and giving priority and more time to my children. Even they feel my presence and love the difference.

To you all Village mates, I love You and Respect You so much. May we see this our space become the best that there can ever be.

Chakra Village – Our Village

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LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CORONA

Jackie Ayuya Mukasa

2020 was yet another year of growth and development in my leadership journey. During the first quarter of the year I worked with a transformative coach, Joy Mirembe who took me through the experience of life being created inside out. I felt like a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly with my coach telling me I am a butterfly and asking me to see for myself.

This understanding is bringing out the best in me as a leader and is also raising my level of clarity, freedom, consciousness and wellbeing. In the second quarter of 2020 I completed a Servant Leadership course at DAI Institute where I gained an understanding of a Biblical leadership approach that adheres to the standards of servant leadership, as modeled by Jesus Christ, and that leads to greater effectiveness and integrity. For the last two quarters of 2020 I took a Masterclass on Leadership Agility for Organizational Resilience offered by Busara Africa and sponsored by CivSource. My key takeaways were the importance of being a tuned in as an agile leader (able to lead without a title, adaptable, collaborative, disruptive, inclusive and network) and the importance of being able to anticipate, cope and adapt to change for organizational resilience. This class

timely and insightful for me as a leader adjusting to the new normal (Covid-19 times).

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit I tried to see the world through rose colored glasses but I could not help but feel anxious due to the Lockdown imposed by most governments around the world to stop the transmission of the virus. The stringent restrictions on travel, social interaction and access to public spaces was causing social and economic disruption globally and I had to figure out how to navigate these waters. As a leader I had to come up with strategies to address the anxiety and uncertainty to protect the health and safety of my team, maintain work morale and momentum remotely. I discovered that being intentional with regards to communication with the employees, donors, implementing partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders was very instrumental on navigating the waters together.

I have learned that I am grounded, warm, and strong-willed minus ego, thus making me a steady and reliable leader. I combine friendship with being a leader and tend to serve as mentor and confidante to my team. I am more of an operations and practical type and

less of an ideas person. I am great at prioritizing, simplifying, issuing clear instructions, and delegating.

I celebrate the Chakra Village for being a support system that enables us to do life together. It is a shelter where we are one another's keepers as connected leaders with connected spirits. It is a granary where we share our collective wisdom, knowledge, and generosity. It is a well where we refill and draw from each other to enable us to raise our leadership bar. Lastly it is a fireplace where we are warmth and light to each other celebrating, supporting, elevating and holding each other accountable and a place to dance. The villagers have continued to keep in touch individually supporting each other and we met thrice online and thrice physically in 2020 to reflect, relax and reboot. I am so thankful for this safe space with like-minded leaders and I always leave the

meetings reenergized for my leadership journey.

My hopes and dreams for the future is to fulfill my potential as a leader. I plan to do this by continuing to work on improving my self-motivation, embracing my weaknesses, learning from my failures, seeking and appreciating feedback, engaging and listening to those with more experience, striving for excellence and investing in myself (self-care and wellness). John C Maxwell said,

Leadership development is a lifetime journey not a quick trip.

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As leaders we need to acknowledge that it is a process that occurs at every stage and pace ourselves to prosper.



2020 WHAT A YEAR!!!

Hope Babigumira

It was a surreal moment as the president announced two weeks of a total lockdown on national television. What was going on with the world? This virus, how bad is it going to be? We all wondered.

As the days went by I started receiving messages.

First message

"Hope can you make masks?"

Me: "Sadly I can't because my workers can't come to work."

And so on and so forth. Message after message. Hammering in the fact that I did not take the initiative to learn how to sew when I've been running a fashion business for over 5 years.

Earlier that year one of my goals was to go to fashion school but I kept postponing it. And now I see why something kept nudging me to learn to sew. Ironically, it was to prepare me to make masks.

After a few days feeling sorry for myself, I started my quest for someone to train me. My search was successful and I got a trainer a few miles from my house. In

the thick of lockdown I would walk to and from the school, which was operating stealthily. I was too determined to think about getting caught. In about two weeks I had learned how to use a sewing machine and was making masks.

I'd later on learn to make other products and I have enjoyed the creative process and the growth is undeniable. The icing on the cake was the fact that I could now make some money.

However, my biggest achievement was the confidence I got from being able to add tailoring to my CV. Humble as it seems, for me it was a proud moment and a life changing one. I get to understand what my future employees will go through and I'll be a step ahead of them making me a capable leader when the time comes.

On a personal note I've grown to appreciate my individuality. To learn that I'm different and accept who I am rather than feel inadequate because I lack a few things that other people have.

Fast forward to 2021, two weeks ago we travelled to Mbarara with the village mates and I had an amazing experience. I hadn't seen the villagers in a while and it was super exciting to catch up. I was reminded of what a support system they are and I'm grateful to God for them.

The Chakra village is a great blessing.

From our first retreat two years ago my biggest take away was from the root chakra.

“The root chakra is what keeps us grounded, and forms the basis for our development. It is the survival center and the most instinctual of all the chakras. The Root Chakra is most associated with our emotions and basic needs of survival, such as food, shelter, and our sense of safety.

The root chakra may fall out of balance or become blocked due to the everyday stressors of life, as well as unexpected hardship, difficulties in relationships, fear and anxiety, and any number of other things that life may throw at us.

When the root chakra is out of alignment, it often leads to an avoidance of conflict, a fear of basic needs going unmet, or a scarcity mindset. Feelings of disconnection, voicelessness, or powerlessness might arise, or one might become stuck, lost, stagnant, depleted, or flighty. An unbalanced root chakra might also cause one to take on other people’s energies too easily, thereby damaging the connection to the self and its personal energies. It is even possible to experience physical ailments like arthritis, bladder or colon problems, or issues with the parasympathetic nervous system.”

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For as long as I can remember this is the balance I needed.

I’m learning to take care of myself and protect my energy. I walk daily, read a lot, and surround myself with a lot of positivity. The cost of an unbalanced root chakra is too high. And I’ve felt its effects when I had a mental shutdown right before the Covid pandemic outbreak.

With my energy renewed, I feel ready to take on the world.

Thank you Village!

Love you 🥰 ■





HOW A HOT BATH CAN IMPACT THE WORLD

Belinda Namutebi

The person who wakes up early to boil bath water and have it delivered for you, has put your needs before theirs. They care more that when you get to the bathroom, you do not have to bear the discomfort of a cold bath. This is especially heartwarming if the person is not your relative, but a friend, who has among other things opened up their home to you.

On the many occasions where the Chakra Village has held retreats, we have been hosted in people's homes. Our guests have gone out of their way to feed and love on us. They have chosen to adopt us into their families and announced that their homes are open, if we ever want to drop by in future.

It is such gestures of love and openness, that have impacted my Chakra experience over the past 2 years. To be deliberate about caring for another and opening up your world to accommodate them.

Even if it means offering a meal, helping with a need or supporting them on their leadership journey.

When we do this, leadership ceases to be a lonely journey that confines you to just solving the problems that are thrown at you. As you go about your day, you are comforted that you are not alone: there's a group of people, who experience the same challenges as you do. They call to check-in or offer a listening ear for the moments you just need to talk.

Ultimately, this self-care and well-being contributes to the energy we carry into our organizations. We are in position to care for our employees because someone reached out to us. We hope that they too can transfer this infectious energy to their colleagues and loved ones. That's how we impact the world. It starts by someone leaving their warm bed, to make sure you have a warm bath.

**Any deep crisis is
an opportunity
to make your life
extraordinary in
some way.**

— Martha Beck, Author





RELATIONSHIPS : THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD LEADERSHIP!

Penelope Sanyu

I have been seen, heard, loved and grounded by a village of friends that have become family. I have walked a straight path with guidance and light by those before me. I have laughed much, lived well, cried a little and been held with deliberately loving arms.

It's not everyday that strangers come together to cook a pot and serve it in the form of leadership but with my village - we have cooked well, mixed the spices moderately and have together served this amazing meal of leadership

in our different spaces of service .

A journey of great leaps, Femme Forte is soaring, Qweshunga is becoming a household name and the leader in me is increasing my sensitivity. This means I am more aware of myself, my environment and my perception of the world which is very key in improving the very relationships that are key to my leadership.

My journey has been filled with **#Qweshunga ! I am grateful**

HEART BEATS! THE SANITIZER OF LOVE

Rita Atukwasa



For how long will I wait
who determines or chooses who to
love

Ooh love, Ooh love
The power of love lies i the giver
The power of love cs not be dictated
its power is handed down by the
invisible one
The one who love has o boundary

Ooh lovve, Ooh love
Zakayo climbed a tree to catch a
glimpse of Jesus ohh yeah!
he had no idea what love would
bring him Salvation, favour, triumph
and Celebration

Ooh love,love,oooh love
My new journey to leadership you
have decorated
What a warm thunderous welcome
for Mbarara City a people of love
You form part of my heart beat
Together we shall grow, rise and
shine
Ooh mymotherland!
The land of milk and honey





IT TOOK THREE BIG STRIKES TO RETHINK, REWIND, RESTART

Berna Bakkidde

The year 2020, is one I cannot forget. Navigating through the odd circumstances got me thinking and reflecting on what my priorities were.

My mission for 2020 was “Re-grounding myself, hash tag Selflove” because that is what I felt I needed to do having lost track in 2019. Those words were paramount, and little did I know that posting them as my social media platforms would come in handy as I traversed through the year.

As we were planning to resume official work at the office after 1 month’s break, my eldest and only remaining brother passed on Saturday 19th 2020. This shook our family especially my father as we had hoped that despite having heart complications, my brother was stable over the years. It also dawned on me that I had to provide leadership support through my brother’s admission in ICU, until we buried him in the village. He was survived a wife and three young children who needed both parental and spiritual support and this was a daunting task. I took on this mantle of support, even though I am the youngest at home. As a leader, I reserved my emotions to focus on those around me by being

proactive and managing expenditure.

Going back to the office was traumatising. I had planned to have a programme reflection meeting with the team, capacity development on programme budgeting and proposal development. I was not ready emotionally! However, as I was resettling back into office after three weeks of being away handling family issues, Government issued a complete lock down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the lockdown, I resorted to establishing and skilling my own young children. I was so amazed with their energy and soon discovered that in my midst was a Doctor, a DJ/Construction Engineer and a Chef.

At first it was an exciting experience, as I relished the opportunity to stay home and spend more time with my children and train the new house help. However, as an institution, the lock down came during the period we usually plan for the year, develop proposals for upcoming activities, and conduct capacity development of the team. Two days before lockdown, I had proposed that we provide staff, especially

those without salaries, some upkeep package in case of a lockdown. My suggestion was accepted, and the staff were motivated by the package.

Three calls for proposals were advertised and I had to take lead. However working with a team that was still in their comfort zone without salaries or communication support was challenging. As leader it is paramount to have regular check-ins and I commenced on that process with my team. It was a learning process for me and helped me to rethink and learn how to continuously support my team while at home. In terms of essentials, I had stocked up the little that I could. I ended up sharing with some staff living near me. For others, I provided psychological support and then reawakened their work mode through convening online programme staff meetings. The proposals were developed but yet again I failed to delegate some major aspects thus increasing the pressure on myself. Working after midnight was the order of the day as I could not focus with my children playing all the time.

Rewinding and taking a few steps back got me into reading some articles on how to provide leadership during a crisis. Attending a Chakra Village check in meeting helped a lot to reawaken my energy levels. I was not alone with questions on how to lead a demotivated team and also developing scale down plans with the existing donors. I knew I could have

done more but this was a first and I had to unlearn in order to learn in the NEW Normal. After the lockdown, we resumed work in phases. I was among the skeleton staff that provided the necessary support. Keeping abreast with emerging issues was key to enable us scale down and prioritise with the meagre resources available. Administrative costs never end as you need space to plan and communication to keep visible.

However as I was gaining momentum, the third strike was that of my mother who fell ill. She died on July 6th. Several questions rang in my mind. I was alone and my eldest and only sister was miles away from Kampala with no network. I had to notify family members. This was my first leadership challenge, I had no one to call in the early morning on the day mom passed. There was no way to reach my Dad who was already on his way to the hospital to bring breakfast for mom. A lot happened in a space of 2 hours, the toughest being informing my Dad about his wife for 49 years had died. Once again, I stepped in and helped manage the preparations for her burial. After burying mom, I decided to restart my life and journey to psychological recovery by moving in with Dad.

During these several crises, I learnt that I had to be aggressive and take a stand in whatever decision needed to be made. I was also reminded of how important it is for leaders to

consult those who have a stake in the process. I learnt to listen to others especially those younger than me and delegated some key tasks to them. I also followed up regularly to ensure that those I delegated did not feel left alone. I learned that a leader needs to grow their network and tap into the several skillsets. Opportunities arise through these networks that one could not imagine. You need to invest in maintaining the relationship with your networks. I also learnt that despite having a PLAN one needs to be intentional, willing to learn about the venture before investing in it, utilising professionals, and ensuring that the plan flourishes.

The Chakra Village is a space that provides positive criticism and there is no judging. The regular check-ins on our leadership journey get into the three Rs (Rethink, Rewind, and

Restart). We are human after all and make mistakes. We pat one another on the shoulders for the achievements and seek support when in doubt. It's a safe space that helps me to learn and unlearn my ways of leadership, not only in my professional space but also my home.

My hope and dream is to attend regular trainings and improving on my leadership skills, read more, support and delegate more those I supervise. I also intend to invest in and utilise my networks regularly, being intentional to change my weak areas to secure my relationship with God, my immediate family and business projects.

I HAVE TO GROW OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE IN THIS NEW NORMAL!!

”





NEVER HAVE I EVER!

Jacqueline Asiimwe

I marched majestically into 2020! It was the year I was turning 50! I had big dreams for my big day! I had big dreams for my big year. Yes, I wanted to celebrate my 50th for the whole year!

But the universe had other plans. On 30th March, the eve of my birthday, the President announced the first lockdown, as an emergency measure against the spread of the corona virus. I watched helplessly, as all my plans for my big day evaporated into thin air. One of the things I missed most that day (31st March), was a visit from my parents. My mom always bakes a cake for me on my birthday. She and my dad had planned to visit me and deliver the cake themselves. We had to content ourselves with calling each other on the phone, as they told me how they were eating the cake that

was mine....

What I did enjoy was a zoom party for my 50th. Some friends had planned to party with me on the 31st, but when the lockdown was announced, we moved the party online.

It had its glitches – like poor connectivity for some. Others hadn't quite gotten the hang of zoom – it was still early days, before the whole world was 'zoomified'. But for those who attended – we had an almighty blast!

And that first experience started the me on the road of many adjustments as I navigated 2020. The lesson of adjustment and adaptation was most important in my role as leader. I lead my team at CivSource, and I am involved in other leadership roles, including



with the Chakra Village – the 2019 leaders’ cohort that I was a part of.

In 2019, we had enjoyed the beauty of in person fellowship as we traveled across Uganda, hosted by our fellow village mates, at their country homes. 2020 put a stop to all that, but again, we adjusted. I proposed, and the village mates agreed to meet online. So we took our fellowship to that space and we kept connected, when COVID-19 rules kept us apart. During one of the on-line check-in sessions, several village mates shared about the things they were learning, how they were adapting and what they were innovating. That meeting led us to share our journey through a video series that we called ‘Birthing in Crisis’. Additionally, the check-ins with the leaders of the various CivSource retreat cohorts led CivSource to partner with Busara Africa, to hold a Master Class called Leadership Agility for Organizational Resilience. It was a ten-week Master Class in which about 30 leaders learned together, how to adapt to change and keep their organizations agile, in a fragile world.

Once the lockdown was eased, the Chakra Village went back to in-person meetings. We met at the home of Jackee Batanda and saw her dream come true. Blue Marble is a writer’s space,

a place Jackee has told us about since we first met in 2019. I then hosted the village mates at my parent’s home in Wakiso, where we learned about vision boards, and we shared our hopes and dreams for the future.

We met again most recently, in February 2021, at the home of Ms Penelope Sanyu, in Mbarara. As is the practice when we visit each other, Penny’s family lavished us with love and copious amounts of food! We danced, sang, and reconnected – body, mind and spirit.

In the end, looking back, 2020 was a big year for me. My organization grew in leaps and bounds. We finally had systematic staff and Senior Management meetings. We broke new ground in our philanthropy work. We supported civil society leaders through our advisory services.

Some days were dark and lonely. Some days were a strain. Some days, I just wanted to walk away from it all. And on those days, I turned to the village. We have created that space where we can be honest about our leadership challenges. We have created a space to nurture and challenge ourselves, to encourage and root for each other. I got through 2020 because I had this village.





OF LOVE AND LEADERSHIP....

Esther Kalenzi

"Hi, how are you doing? It has been a while, just checking on you."

This is just a regular message from any one of the villagers letting you know that you are on their mind.

We hold each other as we mourn and ululate when there is cause to celebrate

Some bake, the rest of us eat-
Some play the music and others sing, dance or watch, there is something for everyone-

At the core of it all, we lead, we love. We see love through parents' eyes, support from partners, joy from children and our fulfilling work-

It is an incredible feeling to be part of a community in which you feel seen and heard, a space where you can be yourself without fear of being judged, a family where love is always being served.

From villagers hosting us at their

ancestral home, to shading ourselves bare around a campfire

From the loud cheers of excitement when any of us wins, to support in motion as we carry each other's dreams and protect them as if they were our own

Our names are mentioned in rooms they may never walk into, honoured loudly and proudly

The Chakra village is a village like no other.

As we continue to grow it, I am excited for what is to come because on our own we have only accomplished so much, but together? Well, we are downright unstoppable!

I love and appreciate the village and all it stands for, from the top, middle, bottom and sides of my heart. My life is definitely all the better for it.

Onwards and upwards.

**Smooth seas
do not make
skillful sailors**

- African Proverbs



LEADING FROM WITHIN: BUILDING AUTHENTIC SELF

Dora Kiconco Musinguzi



Two years ago, I got the profound opportunity of learning the art of sitting with me.

Sitting to touch the deep parts of my soul and connect with who I was and who I longed to be as a person and as a steward of the many responsibilities that have been handed to me.

I had been a leader, and I thought I had tried my best at it. But I lacked a framework and a community with whom to grow along and learn with. I am thrilled to count my blessings 2 years down the road and measure the miles of the rewarding journey I have been a part of.

I always knew that I couldn't just be any other leader – or manager – who only counted the targets vs the money invested, who counted the numbers reached and projects completed. I desired to see people, connect with communities and issues at a more innate level, serve with my heart and not only my head. My dream was to increasingly grow into an authentic person and that way be a steward of causes that would create real change. But I didn't know what to call it. I did not have a name for it.

I did not have a framework.

And then came a time, when we

retreated into the Leaders' Chakra space. The Civsource leadership experience. A place where we met with 19 incredible leaders with whom we have journeyed together and created a great collaboration 2 years after.

Thanks to the gift of sisterhood – I am grateful to Jackie Asimwe and who signed me up for this life changing experience. And to Chigudu, Hope of Africa, a woman who has filled my heart with inspiration to be soulful – to live and lead with a soul, body and mind that is well.

This was the watershed for me – Here, I finally found a framework that resonated with me; the chakra model – living and organising with soul.

The bottom line of this idea was to examine the state of wellness of one's body, mind and soul – examining what grounded me, what fired me or extinguished my energy. As a leader, the framework had one lesson.

“You can't lead effectively when you are ungrounded or unwell”.

”

Here, I was connected to the concept of leaders as healers, as seers and enablers.

I soon embarked on a journey of increasing my grounding and tapping into the energy that is on the inside through sitting with myself, meditating, journaling and reading. I purposed to declutter, to increase mindfulness, gratitude, beauty around me and to be attentive to myself.

I made effort to name and to resist my detractors – stress, negativity, self-doubt, rush and mindlessness.

Over the two years, I am have made much progress as an Individual- the image I have of myself, my dreams and pursuits. I am a better leader, and so is the organisation that I have the opportunity to steward. My network and collaborations have expanded, I have a village of influence and practice.

Self-Leadership

I like to think about myself as a plant that flowers. As a garden of flowering plants. Flowers of different shades, as my roles are. Mum, wife, Sister, daughter, ED, and so much more.

In these last two years there days that have been difficult.

The rush and the fatigue that comes with the call of duty is a real challenge. In these times – my garden slowly faded – my leaves started to patch brown and yellow. Some sprouts withered, the branches dried, the roots struggled; generally, my plants utterly shrivelled.

Times of loss. When I counted low achievements. Times of the COVID 19 impact. Strange weeks at some different intervals. It's in these times that I doubted my strength, talents, brilliance and potential. Often times, as a leader I felt that I was not in charge. All such times and struggles took away from me – my vitality lessened, I gained weight and my health shrieked away slowly.

Then, I revived! I made it back! Sometimes in whole, sometimes in part. The Garden regenerated somehow!

What helped in such times over the two years? The Framework. My leadership wellness tool kit.

The art of re-visiting the tool kit often – finding a time to sit down with self. Touching the palpating heart; listening, seeing and reaching for areas that needed watering, pruning, reassurance and time to heal.

The Passport is one such tool in my kit. A re- imagination of me- my energy, my beauty and strength. My dream moments. My goals. My passport is a flourishing garden. What ought to define me- the different colours that define me. I meditated, prayed, reassured, reaffirmed self, I wrote down my thoughts, re- inspired self, worked out, drank water, breathed hard, in and out, found a new song and there I started to revive, a day at a time!

I am very grateful for finding a way to connect with the energy within me.

Learning the art of re-kindling the fire that warms my heart.

Team-Leadership

UGANET has grown in leaps, but not in bounds yet. We are on a journey of being an organisation that serves with soul.

Two years later – Our team has increased its reflection on how we deliver justice to women and girls and all communities we care for – we constantly ask ourselves how we want to be remembered with each life we touch. We are striving to learn, to read together and improve and practice a positive culture.

We created a beautiful space to sit down and talk together.

We seat at this place to hold deep conversations – some formal and others informal. We eat so much cake at this spot, with laugh and dance, a ritual that has kept us connected. We also love to host our guests in this tent. It's been a symbol of long conversations that we need to keep at, grow and learn from. At the peak of COVID 19, we recreated our programs to address the real needs

and struggles of the communities we serve. Owed to this leadership wellness journey -what it represents and the healing that comes with it – we established a mobile call centre and the Rising Woman Shelter and Wellness centre. It's been a home to over 100 women survivors of violence that received healing support and recovery in just one year.

We celebrate the fact that we could give back, pay the lessons forward, be able to see in depth and reach out in ways that truly impact the deep needs of our communities.

Leadership Collaboration

Being a part of the Chakra village, the shared space of the 20 incredible leaders has been exceptional.

Like a true African village, our symbols are a granary, a fireplace, water well and a hut.

A hut, our shelter, our common place of belonging love and acceptance. Granary, our shared place of wisdom, substance and sharing. Water well, a place where we draw from each other to keep our leadership high and the



fireplace is point of fellowship, a space to keep us warm and give each other light.

Over the two years, the village has been each of these pillars to me, I celebrate each of the village mates in a unique way, they each have brought immense knowledge, love, caring support that has enabled my leadership in all positive ways. We have drawn inspiration from each other but most importantly have held space for each other to thrive and grow.

I was immensely gratified to host this loving village in my home, in Kabale. I too have enjoyed the trips we have made elsewhere. We connect over food dance and great laughter.

Applaud and Honour

Our communities need inspired, capable, and connected leaders. But the system in which our leaders operate is too often characterized by dysfunction, division, and a lack of investment.

I applaud the Civsource Program that invests in leaders that have made meaningful changes on complex community challenges in Uganda.

Lastly, dear reader, this is my chakra Poem; A note to self. One of the tools in my Leadership tool kit. Over the past year, it has occasionally revived me. Helping me summon my inner strength when invaded by self-doubt.

Leadership starts from the inside. Look within.

My passport – My re-imagination of Me

My beautiful garden.

I am plants – not plant. I draw strength in summoning the majority that I am – the girl that I am, a Child of God, mum, the wife, daughter, friend, sister, the worker, the Gardner, the neighbour, the artist, the cook, the pantry keeper – ohh!

Each of my plants is nurtured and tendered in richly manured ground. My sprouts are bright, I am grounded, my roots are firm. I watch what I feed my soul. Gratitude, affirmation, kindness faith, hope and love!

My plants are watered – they will not fear the drought, heat and the scorching sun. I pursue a dream. A goal, a set of daily practises that quench my thirst. I make effort to find water for my soul. I drink water for my body! I find water for my spirit, by drinking from the vessel of life – my faith!





Because I listen to my body, mind soul and spirit – I know when I am getting off balance – I am reminded to connect me with energies in my body.

This is how I summon the Internal energy using my passport – my affirmation tool!!

I have – I am grateful for being here – alive! I am safe. For the abundance that surrounds me – for beauty, for light, for food! Mother earth grounds me, roots me. *I am nurtured.*

I feel – I am a work of art. I create. I innovate. See my beautiful garden with all its colourful adornment. I allow my inner self to be seen and expressed. I am enough. *I am worthy.*

I can – the will power in my belly is awake. It is the fire that keeps me lit. I have purpose on this planet, the strength and life energy to fulfil it. *I am confident.*

I love – I love my self unconditionally. I open my heart with compassion, and I give it away for all humanity. I nurture. I support, I reach out. *I also choose me.*

I speak – I use the power of voice. What I say matters. I give voice to my truth and my inner wisdom. *I am a leader.*

I see – very far. I see clearly. I trust my intuitive knowing. *I have a vision.*

I know – I am liberated; I am one with the universe. *I am wise.*


My garden is beautiful! I flourish!

This is the identity I strive for each day.

This is how I heal, by pursuing my passport, my true state of wellbeing.

Dear sister, I hope you find your true passport and pursue it each day.





**Teeth that are
together help
each other in
chewing food.**

- African Proverbs

CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

Noah Mirembe

Any long distance traveller learns how to prepare for and endure a voyage. One becomes aware of the potential pitfalls or surprises that may be present along the way, like having little to no supplies or the fact that they may be outweighed by some unnecessary baggage that they need to shed off for a successful trip. So, even with travel at a bare minimum, the last year has been a reminder of the lessons carried by generations of humanity, one of which is a reminder of the importance of having the tools to recreate oneself and build systems of support that one can turn to when needed.

Working with marginalized communities, there was a noticeable disparate impact on these social groups as important systems of support in health care and economic survival were disrupted by the lockdown measures. In nurturing Taala's institutional growth, I have been aware of the need for more resourceful organizing for social change, and recognize the need for systems that are built from the ground up. Thus a significant growth point has been creating a listening culture from an institutional perspective keeping a pulse on what people need, and how can we deliver. In so doing, I know that the work we are engaged in is necessary because people continue to seek out what we are offering.

Leadership in crisis is important and necessary, yet that leadership can be

compromised if crisis is allowed to take over. For instance, working at the intersections of mental health and the law, we have observed a resounding need for systems of support that target different audiences, particularly those silent pillars within various community settings. I have been reminded of the need to develop the skill to introspect over what I am able to deliver, and what I need in order to show up wholly and meaningfully to work. So over the last year, I have been reminded that in order to lead in crisis, leadership also means being able to incorporate a balance between pushing and pausing.

I have learned to lead through doubt and uncertainty, and to make difficult decisions in order to survive even if that means slowing down at a critical time. At the same time, consistency in pursuit of the organization vision continues to be an anchoring point that guides where we want to go and the kinds of partnerships that we have chosen to nurture.

Being a part of the Chakra Village, I celebrate the opportunity to lead in community with others, allowing me a gracious window into how other leaders respond to and perceive the world. I value having a community of learning and therefore a community of accountability where I can question my assumptions of what and how it means to lead, and where I learn how to navigate the different challenges that come with leading a growing

institution. I have found ways to create opportunities for my work, thanks to the ingenuity that comes with being part of a vastly skilled collective. The most critical lesson over the course of this journey is the value of nurturing meaningful partnerships that expand my imagination of what is possible.

When it comes to leadership, I dream of a future where leadership is not perceived to be restricted only to institutions, but also decentralized

across communities. This is because people influencing other people is one of the most powerful tools to improve our social conditions. I am therefore deeply invested in nurturing this decentralized collaborative leadership with the communities I work with. In the coming months and years, I most look forward to engaging in focused learning where leaders can support each other across different levels of influence.





Happy

— 2nd —
Anniversary



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