No longer silent: empowering women and girls for prosperity

As a Communications Associate for UN Women in Uganda, I document the impact and success stories and lessons learned from activities supported by UN Women. This involves conducting interviews and collating success stories from different stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners on ending violence against women and girls. UN Women in Uganda actively engages lawmakers, police, civil society in bringing about transformative impact for the lives of women and girls.

Through my work, I tell the stories of these transformative changes in the lives of women and girls. I mostly document these human impact stories through photos, videos and interviews and disseminate them through UN Women’s social media accounts, UN Women Regional Office knowledge
Growing up in a patriarchal society in Zimbabwe, I noticed that women’s voices were silenced, even in social interactions. A majority of people in community meetings were often all male, even in cases where they were discussing issues that required women’s participation such as water provision and urban planning. I have seen similar scenarios in other societies in the region such as Kenya and Uganda, particularly in rural communities.

I believe that we can only achieve shared prosperity when women and girls actively participate in positively shaping our societies.

One of the most disappointing experiences in Uganda was when I heard
high level district leaders speaking with sexist tonal connotations. All these frustrating encounters drive me to keep fighting for gender equality and ending violence against women and girls, ensuring they no longer remain silent. I believe that we can only achieve shared prosperity when women and girls actively participate in positively shaping our societies.

Above: Eva Sibanda conducting a Communications training for UN Women Travel Assistants - they are now empowered and trained to take photos, use social media and tell human impact stories.

As a young leader, I keep empowering myself to inspire other girls through my work. In my role, I support the planning of key commemorative days such as the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence beginning on the 25th November of every year and International Women’s Day on the 8th of March. I take a seat at the table during high-level planning meetings with the Ministry of Gender, high-level donors and other important stakeholders for these events. As a trainer, I empower other women and men in our office through trainings on sexual harassment and communications tools for documenting and telling positive and empowering stories of women.

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My greatest message to young women navigating various spaces out there is to literally **take a seat at the table. I also urge everyone, male and female, to be conscious of** sexist language and perpetuating stereotypes. I believe that government leaders and policy makers should urgently prioritize laws and policies in place to protect survivors (such as the Domestic Violence Act in Uganda) and create more spaces for dialogue and awareness on the need to end violence against women and girls.

- International Day of Rural Women • gender equality

Sustainable Development Goal: **SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**