



Solidarity:

Embodied and Enacted - Learning with the Rural Women's Assembly

Southern African Workshop Report

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Rural
Women's
Assembly

We are the Guardians of Land,
Life, Seeds and Love



Convener & Rapporteur: Dr Donna Andrews

Organizers: Rural Women's Assembly & EthicsLab

Design & Layout: Mari van der Merwe

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Introduction

In response to the persistent failure of global health rhetoric on solidarity to translate into meaningful, equitable action, the *Moving Beyond the Solidarity Rhetoric in Global Health* project was launched in 2023 as a five-year interdisciplinary research initiative funded by the Wellcome Trust with leadership based in Africa and collaborators across multiple continents. At its core, the project seeks to *shift both the understanding and practice of solidarity in global health* so that solidarity can play a more active role in increasing equity, justice, and mutual accountability in global health policymaking and practice. Recognising that dominant conceptions of solidarity have been shaped by limited cultural and epistemic perspectives, the project employs a *pluriversal approach* to generate an intercultural, context-sensitive understanding of what solidarity means and how it is practised, especially in historically marginalised regions and communities. To date, the project has convened workshops across multiple regions: two in West Africa, and one each in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Pacific, Costa Rica, and the Himalayan region.

As part of this project, the [Rural Women's Assembly \(RWA\)](#) (Box 1) convened a three-day Summer School on "Solidarity: Enacted and Embodied" from 23–25 February 2025. The school was a culmination of a yearlong series of online workshops in which RWA members self-selected and discussed country level cases (see Appendix 1 for workshop programme). These conversations explored solidarity in the RWA drawing on their community work, the seed journey, and responses to social and environmental challenges such as COVID-19, droughts, and cyclones. These discussions continued through regular meetings in 2024, creating a foundation for the Summer School as a space to engage collectively with solidarity, exploring diverse narratives, practical actions, and conceptual reflections from within the RWA and beyond.

The Summer School represented an important milestone in the collaboration between RWA, the [Global Health Solidarity Project \(GHSP\)](#), and the [EthicsLab](#) at the University of Cape Town, and brought together participants from nine Southern African countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania, eSwatini, and Lesotho (Appendix 2).

Box.1 Overview of The Rural Women's Assembly:

The Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) is a self-organized network of movements with a slogan "We the slogan Guardians of Land, Life and Love" across Southern Africa, focused on agroecology, land rights, indigenous seeds and food security, and gender justice.

Starting in 2009 with a gathering of around 250 rural women small-scale farmers, RWA has grown into a regional network across South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Madagascar, Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia, and Tanzania, with approximately 165,000 members.

RWA is built around local organising and membership, with women participating in community groups and assemblies firmly rooted in the countryside that feed into their national chapters. These chapters organise training and community workshops, seed-saving initiatives, and campaigns to strengthen women's leadership, secure access to land and water, and protect traditional farming knowledge.

RWA's work is both practical and political. At the local level, members focus on farming, food production, seed multiplication, and community support, while at national and regional levels, they engage in national, regional, continental and international advocacy to influence policies affecting rural women.

The Rural Women's Assembly Summer School

The Summer School programme was structured around three thematic days and followed a participatory process that combined HERstorytelling, case studies, guest lectures, and collective analysis. Day one focused on solidarity as lived experience and historical struggle. Day two centred on conceptual distinctions between solidarity, charity, care and justice through critical reflection on RWA's solidaristic practices. Day three shifted attention toward applied discussions on solidarity focusing on the RWA's seed solidarity, decision-making frameworks and future directions. This sequencing supported cumulative learning and thematic continuity across sessions.

The school was grounded by participants sharing individual experiences of solidarity within their homes, families, communities, and country chapters, creating a starting point based on women's lived realities. These narratives were then discussed collectively and linked to selected organisational case studies presented by country chapters, which highlighted concrete solidarity actions undertaken within the RWA. Each day was a building block which facilitated the deepening of dialogue and understanding of the various ways RWA builds and draws on solidarity.

Guest lectures and guided reading materials were introduced alongside these discussions to support theoretical reflection and deepen collective analysis. This process enabled participants to move between personal experience, organisational practice, and conceptual engagement with solidarity. Throughout the three days, participants, many of whom are deeply connected to land and rural livelihoods, shared first-hand accounts of the challenges and opportunities through which solidarity emerges. By the conclusion of the Summer School, it was evident that solidarity is a key feature of the social and political life of the RWA.

The report presents a synthesis of diverse viewpoints expressed during the workshop, organised around key themes.

Snapshot of the context

The region is shaped by deep structural challenges including severely limited access to clean cooking energy, electricity, safe drinking water, food, and healthcare. Women, particularly in rural areas, carry much of the responsibility for sustaining households and communities amid ongoing food insecurity, under-resourced health systems, and care burdens. These realities are further intensified by climate-related floods, droughts, and recent cyclones, which have deepened existing vulnerabilities while also showing the strength and labour that women continue to hold together in the face of crisis.

HerStories of Solidarity

Participants were invited to share personal experiences of solidarity. The stories highlighted support received from family, neighbours, and fellow RWA members during challenging situations,

including assistance with school fees, protection against mistreatment from in-laws, and support for women experiencing gender-based violence.

Several accounts also connected individual experiences of solidarity to broader political struggles, such as sheltering liberation fighters during the independence movement or supporting families of political detainees. Workplace solidarity emerged as a further area of discussion, with examples of farm workers standing together against unfair treatment as well as union organisations. Land occupations to protect a widow being pushed off her land, and clandestine seed sharing even though it is illegal to distribute or travel with seeds in the market or across borders, were also discussed.

For many, the practice of solidarity was far from remote or new but instead rooted in childhood experiences although not languaged as such. Solidarity was often drawn upon, embodied and practiced at the level of family and community and seemed an integral component of rural life in the region.

“My first encounter with solidarity was when I was in primary school and we were going through the liberation struggle. There was a full-fledged war going on, especially in the rural areas, they were called terrorists then, but the liberation fighters were based where we were. So, my uncle was the head of the primary school that I attended. He was a stalwart, strong man who stood in solidarity with the struggle, and he would drive to the nearest town to bring clothes and kind of shoes for the comrades. We called them comrades and the whole village, because we come from almost the same area, people would gather food. They would slaughter cows, goats, and cook for the liberation fighters. So, we used to feel this pride, even when we were young...I think that's when I became politically conscientized. We felt we're contributing, we are fighting for our liberation...seven years old and war was supposed to be to make you feel frightened and scared, but it made us proud, and we felt we were... even when we were doing nothing, we felt we were part of the struggle, and we were so proud of ourselves, and I still hold my uncle in good esteem because of that. [Emelia, Day 1, page 8]

“So, my grandmother said the true act of solidarity is not when we have everything in excess, but when we have something to share, even if it's a little, it's about sharing what we have that makes the act of solidarity. At that moment, that action totally changed my vision for my view of solidarity.” [Cynthia, Day 1, page 14]

Breakout discussion allowed participants to collectively reflect on the testimonies. Solidarity was described as both a feeling and a practice - encompassing *love, belonging* and *interconnectedness*, while also requiring *material and emotional support, sacrifice, unity, and collective political action*. This raised an important question that resurfaced throughout the session - is solidarity meaningful without action?

Guest speaker: Importance of solidarity and pluriversality in the world today

Caesar Atuire set the tone by emphasising the importance of solidarity and pluriversality in the current context. His presentation explored traditional African understandings of solidarity and their relevance to contemporary challenges. Drawing on his upbringing in northern Ghana, he described

solidarity as a principle of unity, or “one,” a concept embodied in his community’s identity through collective action. He used the metaphor of a traditional African broom—individual straws weak alone but unbreakable when bound together—to illustrate how collective action enables communities to resist threats and achieve empowerment. He offered a critique of how political systems diminish local agency, particularly in healthcare, and stressed the importance of learning from grassroots practices, like the RWA’s concrete expressions of solidarity.

Guest speaker: What solidarity is not

Lauren Paremoer examined what “solidarity is not,” focusing on pharmaceutical corporate actions during South Africa’s HIV/AIDS crisis. She argued that pharmaceutical donations of antiretrovirals, often framed as acts of solidarity, were in fact strategic business decisions influenced by activist pressure, serving corporate interests through market protection, disposal of near-expiry products, tax benefits, and consumer dependency. While foundations such as the Gates Foundation and programs like PEPFAR negotiated medicine discounts resulting in real impact, these initiatives lacked the relational dimension central to true solidarity. Lauren emphasized that true solidarity respects communities’ agency in determining healthcare solutions and fosters knowledge transfer for local production. Drawing on the farm workers’ strike example, she highlighted how rural communities coordinated actions locally, supported by activists when requested. This demonstrated that solidarity is built through collective practices - echoing a point made in a previous discussion that “through joining, one raises one’s consciousness”. She concluded that unlike charity, which often maintains existing power structures, solidarity is transformative, capable of changing institutions.

Guest speaker: Solidarity linked with justice and care

Barbara reflected on her personal engagement with solidarity, emphasizing that it often becomes most visible when absent. Drawing on her experiences and her grandmother’s influence, she described solidarity as recognising connections across difference and acting from a place of symmetry, in contrast to charity, which arises from asymmetry. Barbara emphasized that solidarity is relational and enacted through practice, requiring commitment, risk, and mutual recognition. Unlike charity, which operates through asymmetry, solidarity is grounded in reciprocity and shared agency. She outlined three tiers of solidarity: person-to-person, group-based, and institutionalised, highlighting how practices can evolve from individual action to structured systems of support, often across divisions imposed by social, political, or economic forces. Barbara also discussed solidarity’s relationship with justice and care, arguing that solidarity begins with doing and is inherently relational, while justice relies on abstract principles and formal systems, and care responds to immediate needs in asymmetrical contexts. She concluded that solidarity, justice, and care are distinct but complementary, each necessary for meaningful collective action.

Guest speaker: Solidarity in the Himalayas

Ashish Giri presented findings from Himalayan communities, beginning with his first encounter with solidarity during community-based wedding preparations, where families supported each other reciprocally. He shared three case studies across the Indian Himalayas: communal house construction, death rituals, and a campaign to ban hunting and meat consumption. The hunting ban, led by a Buddhist minority group of women, succeeded despite cultural resistance. The solidarity action was motivated by Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation, karma, identification with

animal suffering, and responsibility toward vulnerable beings. Though economically challenging, participants viewed these costs as worthwhile sacrifices that brought spiritual benefits and community cohesion. Participants viewed the sacrifices involved as worthwhile for spiritual and community cohesion.

The discussions explored the relationship between women's leadership and solidarity, historical context, traditional practices, and the role of isolation in fostering solidarity. Links were drawn between the cultural practices described and women's own experiences, noticing similarities across regions. This sparked reflections on how traditional cultural practices can serve as forms of solidarity and how communities collectively address challenges through shared values and beliefs.

Seed rituals and solidarity

Connections of seed rituals to solidarity were explored, reflecting on ceremonies that bring communities together, particularly women, and promote collective engagement in seed preservation and agricultural practices. Several ceremonies in the region involve sorghum which is central to rural cultural practices. Sorghum is used in brewing traditional beer, preparing food, and in burial ceremonies, symbolizing continuity and sustenance for the next life. They highlighted initiation rituals where youth are taught to cultivate and save traditional seeds, and ancestral ceremonies where offerings maintain a connection with forebears. Community harvesting activities, where seeds are intentionally preserved for future planting, were noted as reinforcing solidarity.

Others described ceremonies such as rainmaking, appeasement rituals, and marriage practices, showing seed ritual role in community bonding, spiritual protection, fertility, and addressing social issues, including providing protection for women against gender-based violence. Practices in South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique were similarly described, including planting seeds on graves, communal planting and harvesting celebrations, and rituals to bless newborns and ensure fertility. 'Across all countries, several commonalities emerged: seeds are more than food—they are central to cultural identity, spiritual life, and community cohesion. Ceremonies and rituals not only preserve seeds but also strengthen solidarity, transmit knowledge across generations, and provide mechanisms to manage social and environmental challenges. Differences were noted, particularly in South Africa, where historical dispossession and commercial agriculture have disrupted traditional practices.



Emerging themes from group discussions:

Solidarity as a lived, everyday practice

Stories consistently highlighted that solidarity is both lived and done. Solidarity often emerges through relational connections. During discussions it became clear that identification as the basis for solidarity occurs at multiple levels within the family, within the broader community, or even beyond one's immediate community. It showed that solidarity is relational in more than one sense: it is about relationships of understanding, care, belonging and connection, but also about recognizing others' struggles and being introduced to collective action through these relationships. These relational connections are also not linear but dynamic and often build upon, deepen and establish solidarity as a way of being and doing that gets embodied over time. Furthermore, the relational connections are not siloed but are experienced in multiple and overlapping ecosystems of communities.

Importantly, solidarity starts with doing. Acts of solidarity are not only relational but also contextually grounded; they require understanding, responsiveness, and alignment with the needs and demands of those involved. The numerous case studies and rich group discussions underscored that this "doing" shapes how solidarity is understood and sustained, reinforcing that ethical, politically conscious, and context-sensitive practices are central to meaningful engagement. Thus, as a practice solidarity operates on multiple levels - from interpersonal to institutional - for RWA it is a circular rather than hierarchical, dynamic with relational understanding and action continuously informing each other. As one participant articulated, *"it is our responsibility...to define what we mean by solidarity,"* emphasizing that solidarity is both enacted and negotiated in practice.

Solidarity as a contextual feminist practice

The role of context in shaping the possibilities of solidarity featured centrally. To this end it determines for RWA what counts as meaningful support, who is supported, what infrastructure is needed and how different causes are understood and acted upon, in practice. It was noted that in rural areas, solidarity is embedded in daily life through shared practices of care, mutual support, and collective action, while urban settings and capitalist systems—can weaken these bonds, fostering individualism and transactional relationships.

The RWA draws on individual and community acts of solidarity and scales them into organized resistance that challenges patriarchy and capitalism. RWA participants described their solidarity as rooted in care, the seed gifting economy, and feminism, enacted by standing with other women on issues such as GBV, land rights, seed sovereignty, and climate justice. This understanding of solidarity shapes and guides their practice, enabling them to be responsive and adaptive to different contexts, as illustrated in the quote below:

"And the difference in our solidarity was that we were not there, going there just to give. We're going there to do something more than the psychological and trauma sessions for relief of trauma and whatever the women suffer that you cannot really solve just by going and gifts, but also teaching them how to sustain their lives while they're in that camp, which is their new home" [Flaida, Day 2, page 19]

Solidarity is thus not only just about fighting for a cause; it is about coming together in ways that build connection, trust and shared understanding through iterative, conscious and reflexive practice. This enables agency animating collective action to serve as a powerful tool for resistance - without these elements, solidarity loses its transformative impact and emancipatory potential from a feminist standpoint perspective.

Guest speaker: Experiences of the Palestine movement

Jaamia Galant reflected on the Palestinian solidarity movement in South Africa and connected her experiences from anti-apartheid activism to current Palestinian solidarity work. She described how participation in boycotts and collective actions instilled an understanding of solidarity that transcends self-interest and involves “unity in action” for a common cause, even when the direct benefits were not personal. She reflected on the challenges facing the Palestinian movement following October 2023 and noted opportunities for growth as younger activists bring intersectional perspectives linking Palestinian rights to broader social justice issues. Drawing on these experiences, she highlighted the challenges of building solidarity among strangers for a cause outside one’s immediate community, emphasizing the need to recognize differences while uniting around shared goals. She underscored the importance of framing the Palestinian struggle as an anti-colonial struggle centred on land rights and human dignity, rather than a religious conflict.

Solidarity Reflections from the 2012-2013 Farmer Worker Strike

Mercia Andrews and Denia Jansen reflected on the 2012–2013 farm workers strike in South Africa’s Western Cape as an example of effective solidarity organizing. They foreground the ways solidarity was built and sustained during the farm worker’s strike. The strike began in De Doorns¹ when workers blocked the N1 highway between Cape Town and Johannesburg to protest low wages (R69/ 7.8 USD daily) and quickly spread to 26 towns across the region. Both presenters highlighted that the movement grew through mobilization, with workers joining after hearing about actions on television and radio. Further, organisers strategically timed the strike during harvest season, giving workers leverage as vineyard harvests couldn't be delayed without causing significant financial damage to farm owners. Workers’ experiences illustrated the challenges of organizing, including unsafe working conditions, navigating internal tensions, such as fears of job loss among striking workers, and the need to support leadership development while sustaining collective action.

Effective solidarity was a result of meaningful consultation with communities, family support for strikers, and consistent engagement between unions and communities. Additionally, they emphasized the creation of infrastructures to support and sustain solidarity, including farm worker coalitions, legal mechanisms, and media teams, as well as coordination with NGOs, universities, and urban communities.

¹ A key agricultural town in the Hex River Valley known for its vineyards and fruit farms

Guest speaker: Solidarity shaped by politics and activism

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge shared her experiences as an activist, Quaker, and former Deputy Minister of Defense, and Minister of Health in South Africa. She reflected on how solidarity shaped her journey in politics and activism, noting that it often becomes most visible when absent. She highlighted the importance of distinguishing between women's practical needs and strategic gender demands. As a new parliamentarian in 1994, she helped establish a Women's Caucus that worked across party lines and collaborated with civil society organisations to ensure gender-sensitive legislation. Nozizwe described her role in the Films and Publications Act debate, preventing the unregulated expansion of the sex industry, and recounted women MPs marching alongside civil society against gender-based violence in 1996 despite criticism from male colleagues. She also addressed challenges to women's solidarity, including instances of "penis solidarity" among men that undermined women's concerns, sometimes with women's complicity, citing cases such as an MP's abuse of his girlfriend and the rape of activist Nomboniso Gasa on Robben Island. Despite expressing concern over South Africa's current trajectory, she maintained optimism, emphasising that "*power is in all of us*" and that collective action can effect meaningful change.

The experiences and case studies shared provided a valuable foundation for participants to reflect on what solidarity means in different contexts and how it is practiced, raising critical questions on how to build and sustain solidarity across diverse political and social realities.

Key discussion themes included:

Building solidarity across differences and shared experiences

Drawing on the Palestine and farm worker strike presentations and reflecting on their own practices, RWA participants questioned the idea of 'solidarity among strangers', exploring how people come together in support when existing relationships or similarities are not apparent. Notably, both cases demonstrate that building solidarity requires **recognition and identification with a struggle or common cause**. However, such recognition and identification cannot be assumed to occur automatically. It was noted that the Palestinian struggle is often seen as a religious issue which limits participation. The absence of township communities in protests highlight this gap, contrasting with the inclusive participation seen during the anti-apartheid struggle. For RWA participants this signals the need to connect different struggles and strengthen solidarity. Drawing on the case study in Mozambique with regards to Cabo Delgado as well as the case study in Swaziland for democracy, we learnt how building solidarity coincides with building consciousness.

"In terms of the perception out there, that this is a struggle [Palestine] it's a religious thing. It's not a solidarity that seeks to fight for human rights. There's been war... millions and millions of people have died in DRC, in Sudan and other parts of Africa. Perhaps the question is, how can we find points of intersectionality on these struggles, on the violation of human rights, on all these issues, so that it's a point of unity? It's a point of drawing the masses of South Africans to be part of this movement, the Palestinian movement... I was once in a gathering which had a panel. One of the young women [panellist and member of the Palestine movement], made a point that when Palestine

movement marches, there are no black people on the march. Where are they? The townships are not there. Yet in the time of the anti-apartheid, we were all together in this struggle...How best can we find unity and raise awareness?" [Lungisa, Day 1, page 27]

Building and sustaining solidarity requires **intentional and reflective practices** that create shared understanding and connection. This includes making the call to solidarity visible, shaping narratives and raising awareness in ways that resonate across different communities and movements, enabling wider identification, fostering belonging and strengthening collective responses to calls for solidarity. In the RWA context, this involves surfacing and identifying tensions and challenges when they emerge; making visible what the assumptions and causes are for the tensions and using the existing forums to talk about them. Critical is to see if the tensions are linked to larger structural issues and to listen carefully to where the tensions emanate from. Through the doing, and in the messiness of the doing, awareness is raised as well as honing in on the root causes of injustice and wrong-doing, and the drivers thereof.

A highlight from the discussion was with regards to competing political causes, demands and solidarities. Other participants, reflected on relational dynamics within solidarity, pointing out issues of ownership and jealousy, can hinder collaboration from local to national levels.

"In this new phase of building solidarity, there's often intersectionality, different people coming together, but at the same time, there's often a challenge of hierarchy. 'My struggle, my need for solidarity? I'm more oppressed. I'm more exploited. Why are you excluding the DRC?' It's a common question we are confronted with. Why are these Muslims - this is what was said to me on Saturday - why are these Muslims not marching here in the austerity campaign? Are they not poor? Questions like that, you know? So, this issue of hierarchy is quite something for us to think about." [Mercia, Day 1, page 25]

Galant noted these challenges but underscored what was a key component of solidarity when she said *"be somewhere in the struggle, ...sitting at home and doing nothing"* is not acting in solidarity. Active participation, even in small ways, is essential, and movements develop as individuals engage, reflect, and act collectively.

Reflecting on these challenges, participants considered the relationship between organising and solidarity. Through the discussion, distinction between solidarity as a relational practice grounded in commitment, mutual recognition, trust and shared responsibility, and organizing as the structuring and coordination of collective action toward specific goals. While these processes often overlap in practice, not all forms of organizing necessarily constitute solidarity. Effective organizing that fosters solidarity requires understanding the context, the relationships and power dynamics among all actors, and using participatory strategies oriented toward outcomes that benefit those most affected. It was emphasized that true solidarity goes beyond coordinated action or shared goals—it involves actively putting oneself on the line, showing up, caring for others and ensuring collective wellbeing. Through the discussion and specifically the reflections from Galant, Andrews, Jansen and Routelge, it also surfaced that in solidarity a transformation occurred - both at the individual and collective level - standing up together and gaining agency changed oneself and the group.

Solidarity is not neutral or risk free

Questions were raised about the risks faced by activists when engaging in solidarity, particularly regarding imprisonment. It was explained that activists were not alone while incarcerated; they

remained part of a collective and continued organizing from within. They coordinated among themselves, challenged authorities where possible, and publicized their situation to maintain momentum. The farm worker case as well as the other cases emphasized that standing up in solidarity has potential dangers - be it imprisonment, loss of employment, being victimised and harassed, burnout and exhaustion, etc. Solidarity is not neutral; it is a choice to act. Neither is solidarity risk free as comes with doing something, therefore has consequences.

“Just that you are aware there are also repercussions. We were acting in solidarity; we were aware you might be singled out or go to prison. But the solidarity shown to me was so good, it went beyond what you might expect. When I was in prison, I had a five-year-old, and he was looked after by my mother and sister. But when I came out, he had new clothes, nice pair of pants, long pants, so a woman in my organization who was a good cleaner and made nice clothes for my son, as part of solidarity” [Nozizwe, Day 2, page 56]

“We weren't alone. Let's start there. We were a whole...There quite a few of us, and even when we were in jail, we're organizing the cadres and challenging the police. So, I think we were not alone, we worked as part of a collective, that is important. And so, the work continued and people mobilized to have our... our situation publicized, so that I think is good so...” [Mercia, Day 1, page 35].

Solidarity is not charity

Robust discussions on the differences between charity and solidarity surfaced. Charity was consistently described as a short-term, often material-based response to immediate needs, reinforcing dependency and hierarchical relationships. In contrast, solidarity was understood as a long-term process grounded in mutual support, shared struggles, and sustained engagement. It involves awareness of systemic inequalities, political consciousness, and active participation alongside others, rather than simply providing assistance. Solidarity was also noted as inclusive and relational, standing with others without assuming who is “needy,” and fostering reciprocal support and connection.

“With charity, there's often an assumption of who is the needy... whereas I think with solidarity, there's not really any assumptions in terms of who is the needy, but rather in terms of who can you stand with in that sense?” [Suzall, Day 2, page 2]

“Charity ... it's part of giving, but sometimes you give out of abundance, but with solidarity, it will force you through the feelings to share what you have.” [Mary, Day 2, page 2]

Solidarity as Transformative/Emancipatory

Across the discussions, it was clear that solidarity changes not only individuals, but also collectives, institutions and broader systems - leading to questions about what makes solidarity transformative? Solidarity becomes transformative when its practice is emancipatory by enabling people to self-determine and developing agency to respond to injustice. By engaging actively in struggles alongside others, individuals are not only supporting a cause—they are reshaping their sense of possibility, strengthening their capacity to act, and influencing what collective action can achieve.

"But we can't stop, because it's a long-term process. Yeah, we need also to be strong and also empower the women to make sure that when we put them in projects, they can sit and not be swallowed by men.." [Alice, Day 2, page 60]."

"And fight to transform. If we don't resist the patriarchal system, it will kill us as women. If we don't fight, we will never see these people respecting our dignity, our rights" [Flaida, Day 2, page 16]

Sustaining Solidarity

The discussions highlighted that solidarity in RWA as well as examples shared by some of the guest inputs is not a once-off act, but an ongoing, evolving process that drives change at multiple levels. Because this change is dynamic, sustaining solidarity requires constant awareness of what solidarity actions are needed in each context and situation. For example, during the farm worker protests, organisers established a coalition connecting workers with NGOs, universities and other key stakeholders. In other cases, activities focused on engaging legal mechanisms to ensure changes are enacted in the law. Additionally, organising educational workshops on key issues like GBV and legal literacy enhance the agency of people to act. Anticipating and navigating potential risks is also part of this work, ensuring that actions can continue safely and effectively. Sustaining solidarity is understanding that it is an act of showing up and in the case of RWA deeply reliant on strengthening the relationships, strategies, and mechanisms it draws upon.

"So, the infrastructure that we created was not only coordinating for joint action, but also how to sustain solidarity, how to sustain the movements. Remember, the farm workers are poor. They don't have resources that they can fall back onto. So, the idea of building a broader infrastructure to sustain the struggle was very, very critical." [Mercia Day 1, page 32]

Presentation: Seeds of Solidarity

The Seed Research and Exhibition Project was conducted in response to the RWA's request to document seeds preserved by their members across different countries. The project was extensive, involving around 427 participants across seven countries. While the research used a case study methodology, it wasn't a rigid, step-by-step process. Rather, it was iterative and reflexive, with country-level researchers (CPIs) constantly moving between their own experiences, the seed guardians' experiences, and their observations of seed banks. This approach allowed for deep qualitative insights despite working with large numbers of participants. Four key dimensions of the findings that emerged through the seed project:

- **Solidarity amongst women:** The research process helped identify "seed guardians" in communities, creating connections between women and establishing a "seed gifting economy" based on reciprocity. Women weren't just sharing seeds but built autonomy, self-sufficiency, and knowledge, strengthening women's agency in the process.
- **Solidarity between generations:** Many seed guardians possessed heirloom seeds passed down from grandmothers, creating intergenerational bonds and knowledge transfer. This continuation of seed knowledge represented solidarity across time as well as seed solidarity economy.

- **Solidarity with seeds:** The practice of seed guardianship represented a cornerstone of maintaining biodiversity. Unlike transnational corporations' approaches, the women's seed-saving practices were aligned with local climates and farming conditions. Women stood with local seeds against TNCs and men, often hiding seeds, protecting seed knowledge and subverting monocropping practices.
- **Solidarity with the ecosystem:** The seed work revealed broader relational networks connecting women to each other, to past and future generations, and to their environments

Resonating with earlier discussions, the research emphasised that knowing and doing were interconnected in the seed work- practices were not separate from the women but embodied by them as part of everyday life. The relational aspects that emerged during the process showed the project created connections across multiple dimensions: relationships with each other, with ancestors, with future generations, and with the environment. Seed saving, sharing and the practices of seed guardianship are tangible and visible narratives of solidarity enactments. When asked about the case study methodology, its value for RWA was affirmed and members were encouraged to continue documenting their stories: "The case studies is where your power lies... don't forget what other stories there are." Suzall urged RWA to put their stories into writing, noting that their experiences often contained theoretical insights "more than 10 times richer than the so-called expert texts." The presentation highlighted how the seed exhibition project was not just documentation but an embodiment of solidarity in action between women, across generations, with seeds, and with broader ecosystems.

Case study presentations

Namibian Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **GBV Campaign:** GBV is recognized as a significant issue with far-reaching consequences. In November 2020, the Namibian RWA held a GBV campaign in the Karas region following a tragic incident in which a woman was fatally burned by another woman. The RWA members in collaboration with Berseba Women for Change, visited both families involved in the incident, providing emotional support and material assistance from resources they pooled from within their country membership. During the event, Health Extension Workers from the Ministry of Health & Social Services had a small sharing session regarding GBV.
2. **Rainy Season Traditional Practices:** Solidarity during the rainy season is critical for rural agriculture: planting and weeding must happen on time to ensure a good harvest. As such, women in Etope village helped an elderly woman with weeding her field during the rainy season. This inspired community members, reviving a traditional practice of collective assistance that had diminished over time and contributed to food security. Labour and resource pooling are central in the solidarity economy as a practice among women in RWA.
3. **Grandmother is a mother to all:** When a 95-year-old woman died in Ompundja village, leaving behind unemployed children and grandchildren, 15 rural women came together to support the bereaved family, raising funds for funeral expenses and providing food. The case illustrated how solidarity addresses economic, social, and emotional burdens, ensuring the family does not face shame or isolation.

Discussion points included:

- Cultural practices of community support - Acts like sitting with the bereaved are seen as solidarity, especially for poor or marginalized families, but also intersect with social norms and gendered roles. Local terms like *okushepa* convey both empathy and action, illustrating the cultural embeddedness of solidarity.
- The relationship between sympathy and solidarity - Sympathy is the emotional empathy for affected families, whereas solidarity is taking collective action in response. As noted by one participant *“We feel sympathy, because we feel the misfortune that they have encountered. And then with solidarity, we have taken action in unity, to feel, to express ourselves for what we or what the family said and what happened to the families. That’s how I am differentiating the two.”*
- Continuity vs. one-off action - Solidarity actions respond to both immediate needs and ongoing issues (e.g., assistance during harvest, continued support for the bereaved).
- The significance of tokens of appreciation in solidarity actions - Cultural practice requires accepting gifts from beneficiaries; these symbolic gestures do not diminish the solidarity.
- Mutuality and learning: The discussion highlighted that solidarity actions strengthen community ties, mutual respect, and understanding, and can inspire further cooperative actions.
- Inclusion: RWA assists all vulnerable groups—elderly, disabled, poor—demonstrating a broad understanding of solidarity in relation to structural issues.

Lesotho Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Food Insecurity and Seed Sovereignty:** Rural communities, particularly small-scale farmers, are most affected by food insecurity but largely excluded from the government subsidy program (FISP). FISP is seen as benefiting multinational companies rather than local farmers; inputs are hybrid seeds and chemical-dependent, unsuitable for rural contexts.

RWA Lesotho responded to FISP by promoting indigenous seeds through a seed audit, exhibitions, and as an alternative advocacy with policymakers. Promoting indigenous seeds is a locally sustainable solution that reduces dependency on expensive hybrid seeds and produces healthier foods. RWA collaborated with farmer groups, local leaders, agricultural research departments, and parliamentary committees.

2. **Gender-Based Violence Response:** Outlined how RWA Lesotho built a women’s network to address the high rates of gender-based violence in the country, creating "healing circles" and collaborating with other stakeholders. RWA first educated its own members through workshops on different types of GBV, challenging harmful cultural norms and then engaged the community to raise awareness and expand understanding of GBV. Collaboration with policymakers, Ministry of Gender, Law Society, NGOs like World Vision and Care, created coordinated public initiatives.

Discussion focused on:

- The distinction between collaboration and solidarity - collaboration can evolve into solidarity over time, with joint action building trust, capacity, and collective impact.
- The relationship between advocacy campaigns and solidarity actions - discussion focused on how advocacy work, such as the GBV alliance-building and FISP campaigning, connects to expressions of solidarity, including healing circles, safe spaces, community

mobilization, and collective action, as well as whether large stakeholder events translate into meaningful solidarity on the ground.

- How to measure the impact of solidarity

Zambia Rural Women's Assembly case study:

1. **Solidarity with Malawi after Cyclone Freddy:** RWA Zambia members travelled to affected areas in Malawi, offering emotional support and prioritising seed sharing to support immediate replanting while soil moisture was still high, framing this as solidarity rather than humanitarian aid. The risks were high as taking local seeds across borders is illegal, the RWA Zambia group insisted that it was “grain” and not seed to smuggle seed to RWA Malawi. Seed distributions were timely and strategically divided between communities, enabling affected households to resume farming and improve short-term food security. Solidarity messages emphasised shared struggle, regional unity, climate justice advocacy, the importance of local seed systems, and community-based responses such as tree planting. They witnessed firsthand the destruction caused by flooding and mudslides. The solidarity account showcased in detail the extent and depth of solidarity required to show up beyond and across borders. The coordination, risks, skills and self-awareness detailed was invaluable. A seemingly small seed, pooled by Zambian rural women has so much power and show of everlasting solidarity. The visit generated indirect benefits beyond material support, including increased visibility of RWA work, stronger member mobilisation, and renewed regional solidarity networks.

Discussion highlighted:

- The emotional impact of witnessing suffering and showing solidarity
- The physical and material dimensions of solidarity actions. Participants questioned the framing of seed support as a “gift” versus humanitarian aid, prompting discussion on solidarity as mutual aid support and collective wellbeing rather than project-based assistance.
- The distinction between gifts, humanitarian aid, and solidarity

Malawi Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Reclaiming a Woman's Land:** The case focused on supporting a widow in Kasungu District to reclaim land that had been taken by her stepchildren, highlighting land rights as a core issue of dignity, justice and rural women's economic survival. It reflects a broader systemic problem in Malawi where widows are frequently dispossessed due to patriarchal customs, weak awareness of rights and limited access to formal legal processes. RWA Malawi used a combined approach of community mobilisation, advocacy, legal documentation and engagement with traditional authorities to resolve the dispute. Despite resistance, intimidation and bureaucratic delays, sustained collective action resulted in the widow regaining her land in early 2022. Notably, the outcome increased awareness of women's land rights, strengthened RWA Malawi's credibility, and encouraged other women to challenge similar injustices.
2. **Cyclone Freddy Response:** RWA Malawi used their membership fees to provide support to communities affected by both flooding and drought, distributing maize, goats, kitchen

utensils, and sweet potato seeds. The solidarity contributed to recovery efforts while also strengthening membership and organisational visibility in affected regions.

Key discussion points included:

- How land rights advocacy connects to solidarity
- The role of traditional authorities in enabling or hindering solidarity
- The significance of using member contributions for solidarity actions

South Africa Rural Women's Assembly case study:

1. **COVID-19 Solidarity:** COVID-19 exposed inequalities in South Africa, disproportionately affecting women through unpaid care work, increased household debt, food insecurity, poor access to water and health services, and a surge in gender-based violence. RWA maintained connections with women's groups through online sessions, teaching practical skills such as making soap, sanitizer, and face masks to address hygiene needs and sustain social cohesion. Food parcels were designed with a feminist approach: including basic needs, seeds for small-scale farmers, fresh produce, and sanitary products, reflecting consultation with communities and political awareness. Initiatives like online study circles and soup kitchens continued beyond the immediate crisis, maintaining community cohesion and empowerment. Solidarity also connected urban and rural communities and incorporated indigenous knowledge and practices, such as traditional medicines. Solidarity was framed as political and relational rather than charity: building capacity, supporting families as a whole, and fostering long-term engagement rather than one-off aid.

Key discussion points included:

- The distinction between charity and political and economic solidarity
- How consulting with communities on their needs transforms assistance and charity into solidarity
- The integration of urban and rural responses to crisis

Tanzania Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Anna's Seed Sharing Initiative:** A member inspired by the RWA meeting in Johannesburg organised 22 households in her community to share indigenous seeds after floods destroyed local agriculture. This supported recovery and promoted agroecological farming.
2. **Response to GBV:** An RWA GBV champion named Maria stood up for an 8-year-old girl who had been violated, despite facing threats and attempts at bribery to silence her. The case highlighted systemic failures in protecting children, including community silence, cultural intimidation and corruption, while showing how sustained pressure from RWA members and a GBV champion moved the case from silence into public accountability and increased community awareness of legal rights.
3. **Response to Disaster:** RWA Tanzania members provided support to communities affected by landslides, including food, psychological support, and by linking women to government development funds to rebuild livelihoods.

Discussion focused on:

- The role of shame and public exposure in addressing injustice
- The emotional dimension of solidarity
- The distinction between case management and solidarity

Zimbabwe Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Drought Response Initiative:** When severe drought affected the Matabeleland region in 2022, RWA members from eastern provinces mobilised, providing drought-resistant seed varieties and emergency food supplies to affected communities.
2. **Women's Legal Rights Workshop:** Following incidents of widows being dispossessed of their land, the Zimbabwean RWA conducted a series of community legal education sessions, connecting rural women with pro-bono lawyers and supporting affected women through court processes.
2. **Community Savings Groups:** RWA members established village savings and loan associations where women pooled resources to fund small business initiatives, agricultural inputs, and emergency needs, creating financial solidarity among women with limited access to formal banking.

Discussion points included:

- Balancing immediate humanitarian needs with advocacy for systemic change
- The intersection of climate resilience and women's economic security
- Strategies for sustaining solidarity across different socioeconomic conditions
- The importance of intergenerational solidarity knowledge transfer in rural women's movements

Mozambican Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Natural Disaster Response:** After cyclones devastated coastal communities in 2019, RWA members from unaffected regions mobilised to provide food, clothing, and agricultural inputs to help affected families rebuild their livelihoods.
3. **Land Grabbing Resistance:** When a foreign corporation attempted to acquire community farmland for a mining project, women organised regular protests, engaged media coverage, and partnered with legal NGOs to successfully prevent displacement of local farmers.
4. **COVID-19 Community Support:** During pandemic lockdowns, RWA members established a rotating fund to support vulnerable households with essential supplies and created community gardens to address food insecurity.

Discussion points included:

- The importance of creating solidarity networks beyond immediate communities
- Balancing immediate relief with long-term rebuilding efforts
- Strategies for maintaining solidarity during prolonged struggles
- The role of knowledge-sharing in strengthening rural women's resilience

eSwatini Rural Women's Assembly case studies:

1. **Political Crisis Response:** During political unrest in 2021, RWA members created safe houses for women and children displaced by violence, organising community kitchens and trauma counselling services.
2. **Collective Land Acquisition:** When traditional authorities allocated insufficient land to women farmers, RWA members pooled resources to purchase a communal plot, establishing a cooperative farm managed by women from multiple communities.
3. **Indigenous Food Festival:** To combat nutrition challenges and preserve cultural knowledge, eSwatini RWA organised an annual indigenous food festival where elders taught younger women traditional food preparation methods and medicinal uses of local plants.

Discussion points included:

- The role of women's solidarity in contexts of political instability
- Navigating traditional authority structures while advocating for women's rights
- Food sovereignty as a foundation for community resilience and underpinned by a solidarity economy.
- Building solidarity that respects diverse cultural practices while addressing common challenges



Solidarity in RWA's practice and reflections

RWA participants synthesized their insights and experiences and critically examined their current practices of their solidarity work. A key focus was on how the RWA approaches decision-making, collaboration, and solidarity, with attention to both practical processes and guiding principles. Participants shared experiences of engaging with external partners, emphasizing that decisions are made collectively through consultation rather than individually. Any collaboration is guided by clear criteria, ensuring that RWA retains ownership, aligns with its values, and participates on its own terms. The process includes establishing guidelines for engagement, clarifying roles, and ensuring that participation is participatory rather than top-down.

Documentation and communication are critical components, both to protect RWA's intellectual contributions and to maintain transparency and visibility. Local chapters are empowered to act independently in urgent situations, while larger coordinated actions follow collective planning. This ensures that solidarity work is responsive and timely, while still grounded in agreed principles. Confirming earlier discussions, RWA solidarity is understood as action that is purposeful, equitable, transformative, and context specific. It is rooted in the organization's thematic focus on land, gender-based violence, climate, and rural livelihoods, rather than being project-driven.

Solidarity is voluntary but guided by shared principles and collective decision-making. Participants noted the need for agility and adaptability in applying these principles. There is no silver bullet for solidarity, but establishing clear guidelines, documenting actions, sharing learning, and reflecting on practice provides a framework that supports effective and responsive engagement. Participants emphasized that this understanding and approach should be carried forward into broader networks, ensuring that solidarity work is visible, recognized, and continuously strengthened.

The discussions raised an important question around whether **solidarity can be demanded** or whether it remains fundamentally voluntary. While participants recognised that solidarity cannot be forced, it was confirmed that engaging in it is transformative. Through practice, solidarity becomes embodied and enacted, making visible the difference between genuine commitment and symbolic gestures. RWA participants demonstrated a clear ability to recognise solidarity in practice, even when it was not explicitly named. They can hold organisations and institutions accountable when solidarity is invoked rhetorically without being meaningfully enacted. It also enables them to assert expectations of solidarity from those who seek to work alongside them.

Drawing on the rich case studies the following is a summary of the 10 key foundational features of solidarity embodied and enacted in RWA's praxis:

1. Democratic decision-making which rests on deliberative processes where listening and patience are central
2. Participation as participatory rather than top-down
3. Respect and appreciation for context and situated knowledge
4. Navigating strategically with external partners, funders, community actors, traditional authorities and state
5. Ensuring values align especially when resource allocations is at play
6. Building solidarity with like-minded organisation with the realisation that in doing solidarity work together political consciousness and awareness develop
7. Builds on existing know-how and experiences of solidarity which members come with from their childhood, community and other organisations
8. It is relational, iterative and reflexive

9. Rooted in the organization's thematic focus on land, gender-based violence, climate, and rural livelihoods, rather than being project-driven
10. Is understood as action that is purposeful, equitable, transformative, and context-specific

Implications for Global Health

- **Center local expertise - learn, collaborate and invest:** In global health, it is widely recognized that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to addressing challenges or improving outcomes. The workshop confirms the importance of contextualised action as solidarity work is rooted in local knowledge systems and networks. Being strategic means partnering with and investing in organizations like RWA, which have established networks, deep contextual understanding, and expertise in practicing solidarity—whether through mobilization, knowledge sharing, or challenging and transforming unequal power dynamics and structures. The outcomes they have achieved demonstrate the tangible impact of their work in advancing both human and planetary wellbeing.
- **Solidarity is not a once-off act:** It is a long-term commitment to collective action against systemic inequities and structural injustices. In global health, this underscores that complex challenges—such as systemic inequities or persistent health crises—cannot be resolved by single interventions; progress depends on continuous engagement, adaptive strategies, and shared action that evolves with the community's needs and context
- **Building and sustaining regional networks** shows how cross-border solidarity can enhance knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, adaption and multi-sectoral responses to complex health challenges.
- **Ground agency and self-determination:** Solidarity generates transformative outcomes in global health because collective agency and voice propel and sustains equitable intergenerational and planetary approaches. Solidarity is not expressed through partnership rhetoric, but through shifts in power - changing who sets priorities and how resources are used. Transformative outcomes depend on a global health practice that builds relationships within and across sectors for self-determination of context-specific priorities.
- **Distinguishing solidarity from charity or aid:** Unlike charity or aid, solidarity actions do not create dependency or reinforce hierarchies. It is an intentional practice that enables people to resist injustice and wrongdoing - whether it is standing with a widow to reclaim land rights to broader issues such as providing seeds to ensure immediate food security and long-term sovereignty after a disaster.
- **Solidarity is not optional:** Rhetoric alone is not sufficient. Global health needs solidarity as a value and action that actively shapes its structures, practices and ways of doing. This means critically examining how current institutions, decision-making processes, funding structures, and norms perpetuate inequalities and power imbalances – and intentionally changing these through bottom-up, participatory actions that centre the needs, priorities, agency and context of the communities it serves and the partners it works with. RWA case studies demonstrate that true solidarity can drive real progress on complex interconnected challenges spanning health, human rights, gender justice and climate.

Appendix 1: Workshop Programme

Monday, 24 February 2025

Solidarity in my lifetime: Enacted and Embodied

8.30 - 9.00	Making the space together; Welcoming and coming together Overview/programme and clarifying expectations	DA
9.00- 11.15	Solidarity encounters	
	Solidarity is often embodied by activists at both interpersonal and within the broader movements they are engaged in. This session will explore encounters with solidarity, be they recollections from childhood, experiences in one's country and finding/encountering/ building/living solidarity as part of daily practice.	
9.00 - 9.45	Part 1: First encounters and narrative circle	DA
9.50 - 10.40	Part 2: Group discussion and reflection	
10.40 - 11.10	Report back and discussion	
11.15 - 11.35	Tea	
11.35 - 12.00	Importance of solidarity and pluriversality	Caesar Atuire
12.00 - 13.00	Solidarity in my lifetime: Three specific sites of solidarity Thinking about identify as/ or with; joint action amongst strangers; solidarity due to common experiences ...	
	There are many nuances within solidaristic practices, but our session primarily focuses on solidarity narratives. It will consider the anti-apartheid solidarity movement, Palestine solidarity and farm workers solidarity where narratives of building solidarity for; living in solidarity with and, staying with the troubles of solidarity will be explored.	
12.00 - 12.30	Solidarity encounters as cooperation amongst stranger: Experiences of the Palestine movement	Jaamia Galant Denia Jansen and Mercia Andrews
12.30 - 13.00	Solidarity encounters based on shared experiences: Farm Workers Solidarity (unions and community), identify as/ or with?	
	Discussion and Key questions and take aways	
13.15 - 14.15	Lunch	
	Discussion and Key questions and take aways	DA

14.20 - 14.40	Third World Solidarity - solidarity calls as a response to? do the declaration have power? If so, why? what do they tell us about context?	
14.40 - 15.20	Signification of RWA Solidarity Declaration - what do they do? do words matter?	LP
15.20 - 16.00	Calling for Solidarity: what do we expect; what is it that we want through this declaration; what sort of work do they aim to do in the world?	
16.00 - 16.45	Solidarity in Action and Doing: Country Cases: Group 1 - Namibia; Lesotho and South Africa	ST
16.40 - 17.00	Wrapping up	
17.00	Tea	
18.30	Dinner	

Tuesday, 25 February 2025

Solidarity as lived and studied: what solidarity might be and what it might not be -
and why the distinctions matter

8.30 - 11.00	Solidarity as Collective Action and Doing Together: Positionality; Power; Reflexivity	
	Nature of Solidarity Engagements, Country sharing	
8.30- 9.30	Group 2: Zimbabwe; Malawi; Tanzania (15min x 3)	ST
9.30 - 10.30	Group 3: Zambia; Mozambique, Swaziland	ST
10.30 - 11.10	Interpretative accounts of RWA's solidarity narratives (Group discussions)	DA
11.15 - 11.35	Tea	
11.40 - 12.20	Report back: issues that came up; flagging similarities and differences; common themes; tensions; common types of actions; institutional structures	DA
12.20 - 12.45	Doing Solidarity, what it means to me How solidarity might be different from acting in caring and just ways. How might these concepts differ: solidarity, care, justice	Barbara Prainsack
12.45- 13.25	Group Discussion	
13.30 - 14.30	Lunch	
14.35 - 15.00	Solidarity for sale? Solidarity as instrumental?	Lauren Paremoer
15.05 - 15.30	Q&A	

15.30 - 15.40	Comfort break	
15.40 - 16.40	Solidarity: Why it matters to me Solidarity as key to an emancipatory project? looking back and looking forward on how solidarity is/or has not been part of emancipatory projects that I've been part of	Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge
16.40 - 17.00	Burning questions	DA
17.00	Tea	
18.30	Dinner	

Wednesday, 26 February 2025

What are the possibilities of solidarity for changing the world?

8.30	Reflection	
9.00 - 9.20	Situating solidarity in Covid and Bioethics, the project, what we hope to do and why we think it matters	Jantina
	Seed Solidarity	
9.20 - 10.00	Reflection and notes on Solidarity from Nepal	Ashish
10.10 - 11.00	Unearthing Seed Solidarity: Ceremonies and rituals	ST
11.00 - 11.20	Tea	
11.20 - 12.00	Seed Narratives: Being in solidarity with is/as relational Solidarity among women Solidarity among generations Solidarity with seed Solidarity with the ecosystem	DA
12.00- 12.45	Lunch	
12.50 - 13.10	Solidarity Decision making framework - why and how? Opportunities and Challenges (Feminist Frame)	ST
13.10 - 13.30	What might decision making frameworks look like and how are they used	Jantina
13.35 - 14.00	How are decisions about solidarity actions being made now in RWA? Country and regional levels? What actions; what causes; how resources are focussed? Femicide/GBV; Land; Climate actions; Other?	LP
14.00 - 14.45	Report Back and discussion	
	What can we learn; what systems are useful? Elements of a framework? What could a framework look like?	Jantina

14.45 - 15.30	Can we insist on solidarity actions? What happens when it is not voluntary? Discussion	DA
15.30 - 16.30	What next: reflections on how to further build cases; could we build a framework and how would we use it; how could we see our government employ solidarity at an institutional level	
16.30 - 17.00	Wrapping up	
17.00	Tea	
18.30	Dinner	

Appendix 2: Participant Biography/Workshop participants



Zakithi Sibandze is a feminist from a family of 5 siblings, was raised by my mother while my father spent years in South African mines. I attended my primary education at Sinceni mission school in the rural areas walking a long distance at a young age. My secondary and high school was at Lavundlamanti High School and a 5-kilometre distance from home. I then enrolled at the University of Swaziland in Bachelor of Adult Education measuring in Community Development. I joined the Rural Women's Assembly in 2016 as a peer educator after volunteering in community health organizations, but I wanted more and to bring change to women's lives. Later in 2018, I was hired as a Project

Coordinator for Swaziland Rural Women's Assembly, an organisation working on women and girls' rights and climate justice. I am currently the National Coordinator. The organisation has 23000 members. I lead programs of the organisation and mentor the young women. I am also the founding member for Young Volunteers of the environment, an organization that seeks to empower young people using ecological ways.



Lauren Paremoer is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town. Informed by a feminist political economy approach, her research focuses on health activism, conceptions and enactments of solidarity in global governance for health, and political mobilisation aimed at realising social citizenship in the Global South. She is a member of the People's Health Movement and is active in leading its Democratising Global Health Governance programme. She serves as an Editor in Chief for Globalization and Health and Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies, is a member of the editorial collective of Transformation: Critical

Perspectives on Southern Africa, and an editor of PLOS Global Public Health.



Mary Sakala is female small-scale farmer but also an activist in rural women's rights seed, water land and food, Mary resides in a district called Mumbwa in central part of Zambia. She is the current Zambian Rural Women's Assembly chairperson leading 9000 women across Zambia and has been in RWA for more than ten years now. Mary shares knowledge on agroecology practises and farmer saved seeds management and encourages fellow women to feed families with nutritious tasty seeds as part of food sovereignty. She is also a seed saver in her own capacity. Her education level is secondary at Kabulonga school for girls. She is a mother of four boys and three girls and married. Solidarity,

feminism and shared knowledge is her moto.



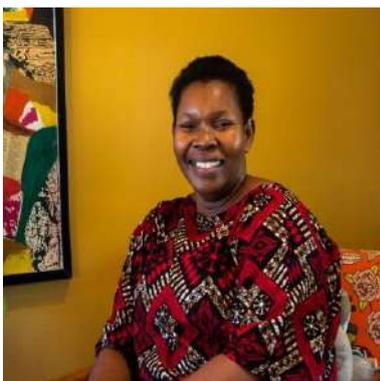
Mercia Andrews - I have worked in several NGOs in South Africa and served as the national director of the Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE) until recently. This work focuses on food sovereignty, climate justice, agrarian transition and movement building. We advocated for a human -rights and community centred to our work. I am an active member of the Rural Women’s Assembly, and act as the regional convener of the Rural Women’s Assembly. The RWA is a movement of rural women in Southern Africa. Our focus is on the defence of the commons, seed and food sovereignty and against encroachment of MNC on our land for resource grabs and extractivism. I am also

an active Pan-Africanist, internationalist and participate in a number of regional, Africa –wide and global forums that deal with food sovereignty and issues of rights of nature. I play a leadership role in, the People’s Dialogue and the Thematic Social Forum (TSF) which are South-South platforms. Throughout my adult life I have participated actively in local, popular organisations especially the women’s movement and describe myself as a feminist.



Norah Mlondobozi is a small-scale farmer for over 20 years, a member of Rural Women Assembly from Limpopo Province of South Africa. She is a former secondary school teacher who holds an honors degree in school counselling from the University of Pretoria. She resigned from her teaching position after 15 years and became a full-time farmer after realizing a lot of children come to school hungry and went back not sure if they will have something to eat. Five years after becoming a farmer she was crowned District female farmer of the year. In 2017 she qualified as an Agroecology trainer after a six months’ course at 17 Shaft in Johannesburg. Norah is now a Rural Women

Assembly coordinator for both Limpopo and South Africa and a traditional seed saver. On weekends she frequently attends church services.



Flaida José Macheze, was born on 26 November 1974 in Mozambique in a small town in Inhambane Province called The City of Good People, where the waters of the Indian Ocean are the great illusion of beauty and life. I was born to a labourer father and an assimilated family where the mother took care of the family and the father worked outside the home. During the time I was in my family, we lived on local food produced in our fields and local fruit from our orchard. When I finished 10th grade, I entered the convent, and as a nun I went to the mission in San José, California. In 2004 I left the convent and went to look after my sick and elderly mother and got to know the Social Movements where

I worked from 2005 until today 2025. I worked with peasants from 16 January 2006 to 30 March 2024 and I currently work at ADRA as a gender adviser. I am married and the mother of 2 girls and 1 boy. I have a master’s degree in gender and development; I love doing good wherever there is good to be done.



Thandiwe Chidavarume is a women's right defender who is holder of a Master of Science degree in Strategic Management and an honours degree in Politics and Administration. She has over 15 years' experience in Managerial position. Currently she is the National Coordinator for Women and Land in Zimbabwe which has a current membership of 45 004 members [since July 2011], leading the Rural Women's Chapter of Zimbabwe, a Reference group Leader for Southern Africa Rural Women's Assembly (SRWA) which is a regional network with a membership of over 200 000 women from the SADC region, She is also a chairperson of the Africa Wide Climate Change Justice

Movement (ACJM) with membership comprising organisations, networks and movements in Africa, she is also Grant making Community Member with Mama Cash [Community member comcom]. She has conducted several research projects which include Southern Africa Traditional Seed Audit Research which was conducted in seven SADC countries. Above all she is also a passionate farmer, and she has a strong conviction that if rural women have access, control and ownership of land and related resources they will end hunger, poverty in their communities and they will be able to challenge the status quo and fight for their rights. Her vision is to see just distribution of land, other natural resources, full recognition of women's land rights and climate justice.



Jaamia Galant has been involved in Palestine solidarity campaigns for more than twenty years and is the current chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in Cape Town. She is also the secretary of the Board of the Claremont Main Road Mosque where she co-leads the mosque's solidarity efforts through their Jihad Against Poverty and other social justice campaigns. She is a trustee of AIDC. In her day job, she is an Institutional researcher at UCT, with a special interest in the teaching and learning of school mathematics.



Jantina de Vries is the Director of the EthicsLab and Professor of Medicine at the University of Cape Town. Her early scholarship focused on the ethics of genomics research in Africa; she now explores the notion that ethics is political and preserves power and dominance in the world in particular ways. She is a member of the Ethics Committee of [Médécins Sans Frontières \(MSF\)](#) / Doctors Without Borders and the LMIC (low- and middle-income countries) Advisory Board of the [Wellcome Trust](#).



Emilia Hatendi is a Social Development Specialist with vast experience in community development; she holds a BSc Honours Degree in Political Science and Administration. She is Gender and Human Rights Activist who is passionate about Social, Economic and Climate Justice. With more than ten years' experience in the Civil Society Sector working with marginalised rural women and girls, she makes significant contributions to their socio-economic and political advancements. She played a significant role in building and sustaining Women for Water and Rural Women's Assembly Movements in Zimbabwe, pushing for women's land and water rights, socio-economic and climate

justice whilst advancing the right of women to participate in political leadership and decision-making processes. Prior to joining the Civil Society I worked for the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare where I gained vast experience in Policy work which has helped me to mobilise for policy influence and engagements with key stakeholders particularly traditional leaders and policy makers. Currently she is the National Coordinator for Centre for the Development of Women and Children (CDWC) which is a member of Rural Women's Assembly Zimbabwe and by extension Southern Africa Rural Women's Assembly, part of the RWA Zimbabwe leadership and represents the country chapter in the Regional RWA Reference Group Meetings. Her role demands a high level of Movement Building, Capacity Enhancement, Policy Advocacy and engagement with both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Over the years she has helped design and administer data collection and analysis tools which helps inform RWAs strategic focus, advocacy efforts and policy development.



Heidi Matisonn trained as a moral and political philosopher. She is employed as a Senior Lecturer in Bioethics in the EthicsLab based in the Neuroscience Institute at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. She is also an honorary research associate at the University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The central theme of Heidi's work is to think and enact care in the context of the academy. As a philosopher, this means conceptualising and understanding 'care' as an essential component of what makes us human. As an academic teacher, this means thinking deeply about how to structure a bioethics curriculum so that students have optimal opportunities for learning and development whilst

also being supported to make sense of the ethics of our world. As a bioethicist, it means advocating for the integration of perspectives from care ethics into how we think about and address ethical challenges. It also means working alongside healthcare providers to understand the importance of care in building ethical resilience.



Lungisa Huna is a South African Social Justice Activist a Co-coordinator and member of Rural Women Assembly. She is Co-Director of the Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE). Huna has wealth of knowledge, experience especially in the NGO sector for more 20 years in strategic leadership positions and as a director. She has vast experience in community and institutional development processes and has established initiatives and programmes for the development of emerging women leaders and provides mentorship support to the young aspiring leaders. Key to her work is building women's voice and agency in societies where inequality is dominant.

Lungisa supports the building of migrant women movement. Huna has a Master's Degree in Social Reflective Practice and Development – London metropolitan University.



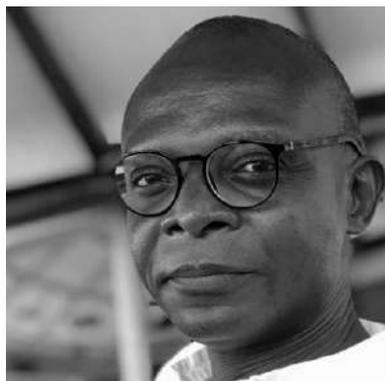
Alice Kachere is a renowned Malawian farmer, activist and leader who has dedicated her life to empowering rural women. Born on September 25, 1970, in Kalumbu village, Lilongwe district, Malawi, Alice grew up in a family farming background, which instilled in her a strong connection with the land and community. Alice's education includes a Junior Certificate, and she has received training as an advocate for women from FARNRPAN. Her leadership and advocacy skills have been evident throughout her career, with notable achievements including: Board member, NASFAM (2009-2010); selected as a board member for the National

Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi; Women Committee Member, World Farms Organization (2011-2014): dedicated to empowering rural women, Alice was selected as a member of Women's Committee; Acting Coordinator, Rural Women's Assembly: Currently serving as an acting coordinator for the Rural Women Assembly; Women Representative, District Council: Elected as a Women Representative, Alice continues to advocate for women's rights; Farmer and Seed Saver with 25 years of experience in farming, Alice promotes indigenous seeds and agroecology; Activist: A vocal advocate against gender-based violence. Alice fights for women's rights and social justice. She is a Female Brand Ambassador for Women Climate Justice campaign, Alice has travelled extensively, advocating for women farmers' rights. Notably, she met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to negotiate global efforts for women's participation in agriculture. Alice's life's work is a testament to her passion for empowering rural women, promoting economic empowerment and improving livelihoods. Her leadership and advocacy continue to inspire and uplift countless individuals, leaving a lasting impact on her community and beyond.



Barbara Prainsack is a Professor at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, where she also directs the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Solidarity (CeSCoS), and the Research Platform "Governance of Digital Practices". Her work explores the social, regulatory and ethical dimensions of biomedicine and bioscience, with current research projects focusing on personalised and "precision" medicine, on citizen participation in science and medicine, and the role of solidarity in medicine and healthcare. Her latest books are: The Pandemic Within: Policy Making for a Better World (with H. Wagenaar,

Policy Press, 2021); and *Personalised Medicine: Empowered Patients in the 21st Century?* (New York University Press, 2017). Barbara is also Chair of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies advising the European Commission. She holds an Honorary Professorship at the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Sydney, is an affiliate at the Department of Global Health & Social Medicine at King's College London, and of the Centre for Health, Law, and Emerging Technologies (HeLEX) at the University of Oxford. She is also a member of the British Royal Society of Arts, an elected foreign member of the Danish Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, an elected member of the Academia Europaea (AE), an elected member of the German National Academy of Science and Engineering (acatech), and an Elected Corresponding Member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.



Caesar Alimsinya Atuire - I am a philosopher who works on the dialogue and overlaps between African and Euro-American philosophy. My research draws on various traditions of African philosophy to address global ethical issues. I have worked on the frameworks informing the understanding of mental health in the African context, the principles surrounding research and healthcare ethics in a communitarian context, and how African conceptions of solidarity can contribute to conversations around the right to health and global health. I have also worked on models of decolonization in global health and contributed to the conversation around Black Lives Matter and the removal of

statues of racists from the public space. In short, I am a philosopher who is concerned about ethics and frameworks of equity in the generation, dissemination, and sharing of knowledge and resources in the health and healthcare spaces. I lead currently leading a team of highly qualified colleagues from across the globe on a Wellcome Discovery Award titled “Moving Beyond Solidarity Rhetoric in Global Health”. Outside academic life, I lead an NGO, Amicus Onlus, that operates in healthcare, basic education, vocational skills training, and re-integration of returned illegal migrants to Europe in Ghana (<https://www.amicusonlus.org/>). Our work is mainly among rural communities and the underprivileged. This dimension informs and compliments my philosophical commitment to a more ethical world.



Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge is perhaps the only Quaker and pacifist to have found themselves second-in-command of their country's defence forces. Madlala-Routledge was born in KwaZulu-Natal and began to study medicine at the University of Natal. Her grades suffered after she was drawn into student politics by Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, and she switched to a science degree at the University of Fort Hare (where Nelson Mandela took his degree). She was jailed three times for her political activism – finally serving a year in solitary confinement. In 2004, she was appointed Deputy Minister of Health. In that role, she pushed for

a more forceful approach to South Africa's HIV crisis - which was then killing 800 people a day and infecting 1,000 more - and was met by growing resistance from the health minister, Tshabalala-Msimang, who at the time was promoting so-called 'African' cures for AIDS, based primarily on diet. She is a campaigner to end sex-trafficking of women in South Africa. Currently she serves as the director of the [Quaker United Nations Office](#) in Geneva.



Suzall Timm is a scholar-activist and a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Johannesburg. Over the past years, she has been actively engaged in solidarity work with the Rural Women's Assembly. Her research interests include environmental governance, regulation, feminism, waste work, green criminology, and waste management. Suzall co-designed (with Dr Donna Andrews) and taught a course on Radical Activism: Epistemology, Agency, and Positionality. She was also part of the research team, alongside Drs Donna Andrews and Daniel Chavez, that produced the photo-documentary *The Guardians of Seed, Land, and Life: The Seed*

Research Journey of the Southern African Rural Women's Assembly.



Ashish Giri holds an MSc in International Health and Tropical Medicine from the University of Oxford and a Master of Health Administration in Public Health from the TATA Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. With over 5 years of dedicated experience, he has been deeply engaged with disadvantaged communities, grassroots organizations, and governmental bodies in India. In his previous role, Ashish was involved in strategizing the Tribal Health Collaborative - a multi-stakeholder initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (India), BMGF, USAID and the Piramal Foundation that aims to end all preventable deaths among the 104 million indigenous people of India. Ashish is a Research

Manager on the Solidarity in Global Health and manages the research in India and Nepal. Together with the larger team, Ashish will be responsible for the conceptualization of solidarity, particularly within the Indigenous and Himalayan communities of India, Nepal, and the Tibetan population residing in India.



Mamalefetsane Phakoe is a Mosotho farmer and the National Chairperson of Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (Lesotho) consisting of 35 farmer associations and serves on the boards of Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum across 15 countries and Africa Climate Justice Movement. She is the General Secretary of Hope for Rural Women Assembly of some 4500 rural small-scale farmers. Mamalefetsane is a proudly Mosotho woman. A mother of two girls and a boy, grandmother of four boys. She has an educational background in Adult Education from the National University of Lesotho, leadership for Change as well a business Management.



I am **Khahliso Namane** aged 21 living in Lesotho. I was raised by both parents from childhood. I studied at Masite Primary and St Barnabas High School where I completed and passed my LGCSE very well. I was a class monitress both Primary and High School. During my high school level I was chosen by one of the non-governmental organization to engage in a variety of activities with children. I also started a business of making women cultural attire which we were taught at school. In the years 2023 to 2024 I applied to a nursing program but failed to be admitted due to high competition and I had to supplement Mathematics. I got married towards the end of 2024 and continued with my studies.



Judith Patrick Singibala, a Tanzanian community development activist. A special needs practitioner utilizing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) tools, she supports children with autism and other special needs. Judith also empowers women in business and agriculture, addressing issues like land advocacy and gender-based violence through her work with the Rural Women Assembly - Tanzania chapter. She mentors young girls in leadership, inspiring the next generation of changemakers. A trained NLP practitioner, she uses counselling and therapy, incorporating principles of "order, balance, and connection" into her problem-solving approach. Her work demonstrates a

commitment to holistic support for vulnerable individuals and communities.



My name is **Emily Mphazi**, 46years of age, born in a family of 5 from the central region of Malawi Ntchisi District. I went to high school never to college. Am married to Potipher, blessed with two kids (son and daughter). I was involved in farming way back and worked with different organisations such as NASFAM and ACTION AID. I was the chairperson for Coalition For Women Farmers (COWFA) and now working with RWA Malawi as a chairperson. I have managed to acquire my own land for farming which is a major achievement. This year am registered as one of MEGA farmers in Malawi taking part in fighting hunger in Malawi and am also involved livestock farming. My vision is to see more

women empowered and become financially stable in next five years. I like reading books, watching TV, cooking, and cooperate with family and friends.



Erica-Catherine Walter Mulaga is from Tanzania. She is the RWA chapter Team Leader as well as the Executive Director of MIICO an NGO based in Mbeya- Tanzania. She is experienced professional Development practitioner with experience of more than 30 years on development activities both working with public and NGO sectors. Her experience includes Community Organising, Facilitation, Programme and Organisation Management.



I am **Elizabeth Amutenya**, born 1970, in Ompundja village, Oshana Region, Namibia. I was raised by my parents who were farmers and I am a farmer myself. I spent my early years of school at Ompundja Junior Primary School, then I went on to middle school at Kapolo Senior Primary School, and then I spent my grade 8 to 10 at Oshakati Secondary School. Due to financial reasons, I did not do grade 11 but I did Distance Learning for my 12th grade. During my time doing Distance Learning I was recruited to teach people how to read and write, through an adult education program. During my college years I again did Distance Learning at the University of Namibia, and I majored a diploma in

adult education and community development, then I later earned an Honours degree in Education (lifelong learning). Currently I train young people on business management, and I also aid them with loans as a startup capital for their enterprises. I am also a leader of the Namibian Rural Women Assembly which operates in all 14 regions and it has 9000 members and I also serve in a number of different boards and committees that target community development mainly the farming sector such as Land Resettlement Committee in Oshana Region, Executive Committee member of Oshana Regional Farmers Union, Board member of Namibia National Farmers Union.



My name is **Docus Kapwaya**. I live in Zambia Lusaka Province Rufunsa District Mukonka village. I am a farmer and a member of RWA. I grow different indigenous seeds for example local maize - Gankata kafwamba, red maize, sorghum, groundnuts, beans, pigeon peas, sun hemp, red and black velvet beans, pumpkins etc. I also keep, raise and sell chickens to the entire village. I also share seeds with the under privileged.



Rolina Apolonia Amunjera - I have been a committed feminist ever since my upbringing as a girl, which shaped me into the woman I am today. Growing up as one of three siblings, we faced the tragic loss of our mother when we were very young and were raised by our guardian mother. Despite these challenging circumstances, I successfully completed my primary and secondary education. I further pursued my studies and have become a highly organized and efficient secretary with over fifteen years of experience providing administrative support to executives in a fast-paced office environment. In addition, I play a leadership role in the Namibian Rural Women's Assembly and

in various positions of that I am entrusted in such as regional leader, school board chairperson and youth group.



Cebile Delisile Dlamini is a feminist and activist dedicated to advancing women's rights, girls' empowerment, and climate justice. She is a founding member of the Swaziland Rural Women's Assembly (SRWA), a grassroots organization that is part of the Southern African Rural Women's Assembly. Cebile has served SRWA in various leadership roles, including two terms as Secretary General on a voluntary basis. She currently holds the position of Treasurer General. Professionally, she is an accountant with experience working in different organizations and the trade union movement. Beyond her activism and professional work, she is also a farmer, cultivating crops, vegetables, and

livestock. She is a self-motivated, reliable, and hardworking individual, adaptable to challenges and committed to teamwork. SRWA brings together women from various community-based groups, boasting a membership of approximately 23,000 women. Cebile is deeply passionate about women's empowerment, advocating for education, self-improvement, and women's active participation in decision-making spaces. She envisions a society where women stand up for their rights unapologetically, free from oppression, and fully engaged in shaping their own futures.



Silvia Dywili, is a 30-year-old activist and feminist, daughter, older sister of 2 brothers, friend of some young and older women. Silvia was born in Maputo on July 13, 1994, the daughter of a young woman who was an artisan. She found herself enjoying school at an early age because she was told that studying was the way to avoid becoming marginalized. Silvia has a degree in Human Resources Management. She never pursued her degree because she never saw any purpose in it and decided to focus her young career on Human Rights, with an emphasis on youth, agroecology and Sexual and Reproductive Rights. She was a mentor for the Roll Model Initiative (an initiative that aims to

inspire girls and young women to pursue careers in the exact sciences and technologies by supporting women who are dedicated to these areas).



Donna Andrews is senior researcher at the EthicsLab at the University of Cape Town. She is part of a diverse team from over seven regions in the world working on pluriversal understandings of solidarity. The project titled *Moving Beyond Solidarity Rhetoric in Global Health* is committed to ensuring that voices that are often silenced, are centred. She is a critically engaged scholar-activist and trained political economist committed to south-south work. Her recent work examines the philosophical and political economy implications of food in the context of social subjects' relations to nature, the ecological crisis, planetary solidarities, feminist agency, just transitions and the commons. She is associated with the Rural Women's Assembly and the

Transnational Institute (TNI), and serves as a juror for the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT). She is part of an editorial collective for *Transformation: Critical Perspectives for Southern Africa* as well as an editor of FIAN *Right to Food and Nutrition Watch*.



Denia Jansen - I am a dedicated feminist, and activist for farmworkers' rights, land justice, and gender equality. Coming from a family of farmworkers many of whom still work the land today my commitment to farmworker rights is deeply personal. This lived experience drives my work as a land rights activist, advocating for the landless, including rural women and farmworkers, who are often marginalised and voiceless. My fight to end gender-based violence (GBV) focuses on empowering victims who have lost trust in the justice system, offering them support and a path to reclaiming their power. I believe in equality for all who suffer under the brutal systems of capitalism and

patriarchy, and my activism is rooted in a vision of justice, dignity, and freedom for the most vulnerable. My extensive experience in grassroots organising over the years has deepened my political understand of the devastating effect of unemployment and poverty amongst young black woman and youth. ***“We must continue to see that the struggles of women, the struggles of people of colour and the struggles of land are all intertwined”- Winona LaDuke***