



Breaking Bread Together....

By Jacqueline Asimwe

One of the things I have pondered a lot recently is how much of ourselves and our upbringing, we bring into the work that we do.

I am a Preacher's kid. My father served as a prelate in the Church of Uganda for more than 40 years of his life. During that time, we hosted all manner of people and fellowships at our home. My mother was the consummate hostess, always making sure that there were several flasks of tea and enough food to eat for all visitors who dropped by. I grew up with a deep culture of community, fellowship, and hosting. In our home, breaking bread was a way to cement relationships and to create meaningful connections. Breaking bread together was a way to care both for the body and the heart.

I have tried to emulate this as I work in and with civil society in Uganda. One of the gifts I know that I bring to the civil society space is caring. I care deeply for the people we work with. I care deeply for the people we serve as CivSource Africa. I witness the struggles leaders go through to keep the lights on, to keep the work going, to keep strong mentally, physically and in all other ways. I know that in a socio-political context like ours, this is not an easy thing to do. I also know we mostly meet around work. Rarely do we meet to let our hair down, set aside our titles and organizations for a few moments, step away from our human doing and just be human beings.

That is the backdrop against which I recently hosted several NGO leaders at my home. I wanted us to just be. I wanted us to get to know each other, and for once, not to talk about work or the shrinking space, not because these things don't matter, but because we also live ordinary lives. So, the invitation to the leaders was to come and 'break bread together'. We had a great conversation over food. We talked about what we love to do when we are not doing our jobs. We spoke about our hobbies and our passions. The interests were varied – from farming, to growing flowers, to reading, to an insatiable appetite for current affairs, to mentoring young people on weekends. And some said all they really have time for – all they really like to do in their spare time is sleep. It reminded me about one of the Instagram accounts I follow. In a capitalist world that is obsessed with work, this lady is interested in the notion of rest as resistance. She has a fully-fledged Nap Ministry and has written a book about rest.

At the gathering at my home, we teased each other, we laughed, and we just had conversations about self. That was my way, our way as CivSource Africa, to take care of the leaders, for a few hours on a Saturday afternoon. It was our way of showing them how much they mean to us and how much we see them. They are not only their work. They are much more. This breaking of bread together was to get to know and to connect to the much more.

And maybe that's how movements are built – through the work of creating and sustaining meaningful relationships – through breaking bread together.

Jackie Asimwe

CEO CivSource Africa

