

Long Story, Short (17)

What does it mean to be an Ally in hostile environments?

“Long Story-Short” is a weekly email describing one LGBTQIA+ inclusion principle around 250 words (or less!) while demystifying some of the complexities around LGBTQIA+ inclusion in humanitarian and development environments.

In our recent *Embracing Inclusion* workshop, we had a great discussion about what being an LGBTQIA+ ally means in terms of the aid sector in Africa. One of the participants said “As a mum, and if my child was in this position, I would be in ‘battle-mode’ every day.”

Battle-mode can absolutely be a part of allyship. But there are a multitude of ways that you can be an ally, ranging from quiet internal advocacy to ensuring LGBTQIA+ issues are raised in coordination meetings.

In places where there high there is social/religious/political hostility toward LGBTQIA+ people (*and* their allies), one of the most important things that you can do is just to let the LGBTQIA+ people around you – colleagues, programme beneficiaries, family – know that you support them and that they are safe with you.

I wear a pride pin on my bag that says “ally”. As I am in East Africa, I want to let people know that **if they ever feel threatened or unsafe, they can come to me**, whether in work or social contexts, or for kids when I am picking mine up at school.

Being an ally can also mean **tackling workplace policies**. One member of our team talks about a former country director who pushed their HQ to extend security coverage to their partner, because that partner’s employer refused to extend benefits to same-sex partners.

Enforcing non-discrimination is also critical, such as reminders –even disciplinary action - about respectful language.

And then there is direct **programme advocacy**. In cluster meetings and working groups, push for LGBTQIA+ vulnerability indicators and inclusion in HNAs and RRP, and speak up about specific sectoral needs.

Have some other ideas? Let me know, and I can include them in a future *Long Story, Short*.

References and Resources

Love Matters Africa : [How to be an LGBTQ-ally](#)

Straight for Equality: [Guide to being an Ally to LGBTQ+ people](#)

Women’s Media Centre : [Learning how to be an LGBTQ+ ally in conservative Kenyan society](#)

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