

Empowering Women - Ending Violence in South Africa



Ntomboxolo Mrubata from the Bitou council proudly displaying the Joy Community Laundry signage. *Credit: Ntombi Mbadlanyana*

“In 2012 I was approached by a local councillor who suggested that I start a laundry business. I was very scared but I took that first step and the Municipality of Bitou (in the Western Capr Province of South Africa) donated a vacant building space and assisted me to set up the laundry,” recalls Ntomboxolo Mrubata. “I received two washing machines, three dryers and ironing boards as

donations. I hired three women to help me out with the work in 2013. I was informed about the Gender Links (GL) entrepreneurship training and I remember how excited I was about joining the project. I had never attended a course on entrepreneurship before. I learnt the importance of having a proper business plan and strategy. I also had to develop a personal development plan about my future. This exercise made me realise that I needed to be serious about my business and my growth as a person. I have become more dedicated and serious about growing the laundry project. The business has hired three more staff making a total of eight people working at the laundry. I feel that working with GL has helped me to gain my confidence, I also think I was avoiding dealing with my pain for a very long time. I was also selected to present my business plan at GL's South Africa Summit in Johannesburg. It was the first time I had been to Johannesburg or taken a flight. It was an amazing experience. I came back from the Summit with more energy and feeling motivated to do my best and to think about how I can take my business to the next level. My life has changed for the better.”

KEY FACTS

- 150 women started the programme. 79% completed a business plan; 54% followed through on the plan.
- 72% grew their businesses and added new products; 69% found new markets.
- 65% opened a bank account.
- The average increase in income per month for South African participants rose from a negative position to R532. Overall the project led to an annual increase of R542,892 in the income of those participating.

- 64% indicated a positive change in their financial status after the programme
- Gender attitudes are measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS); at 72% the participants GPS score is higher than the community GPS score (62%) after the project. This shows a high level of gender awareness on the part of participants, but a need for more work within councils.
- 74% indicated experiencing less or much less gender based violence.

Gender Links (GL) is a Southern African NGO committed to an inclusive, equal and just society in the public and private space in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development that is being updated in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, Beijing Plus Twenty and Africa Agenda 2063. GL coordinates the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance and works to achieve the 2030 targets of the Protocol in its core media, governance and justice programmes.

Why this project?

Since its founding in 2001 GL has worked with over 2000 women in documenting their experiences of Gender based Violence (GBV). GL South Africa has also conducted baseline research on violence against women (VAW). The results showed that over three quarters (77%) of women in Limpopo; 51% of women in Gauteng; 45% of women in the Western Cape and 36% of women in KwaZulu Natal report experiencing some form of violence (emotional, economic, physical or sexual) at least once in their lifetime both within and outside their intimate relationships.

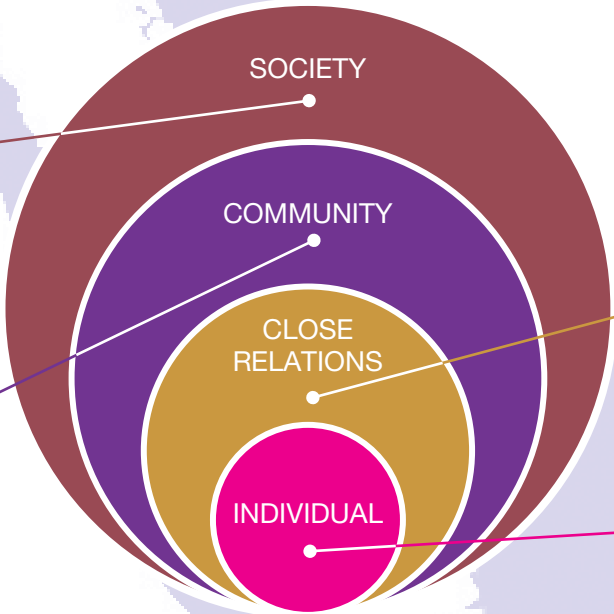
“I am really grateful that I attended the first meeting with Gender Links, otherwise I would not have made some of the decisions that I have made. I would not have known about the small grants from the Department of Agriculture and I would have been afraid to think about the future.”
*Ntombi from Witzenberg

A higher proportion of men in Gauteng (78%) and KwaZulu Natal (41%) than women admitted to perpetrating violence against women in their lifetime. A lower proportion of men, compared to the proportion of women in Limpopo (48%) and Western Cape (35%) admitted to perpetrating some form of violence against women. Many women spoke about staying in or returning to abusive relationships because they lacked economic independence or experienced financial control as a form of abuse. GL set out to test the links between economic empowerment and ending GBV.

What the project involved

Public realm of power - policy/strategy to meet the needs of women in business - access to assets, financial services and business development opportunities

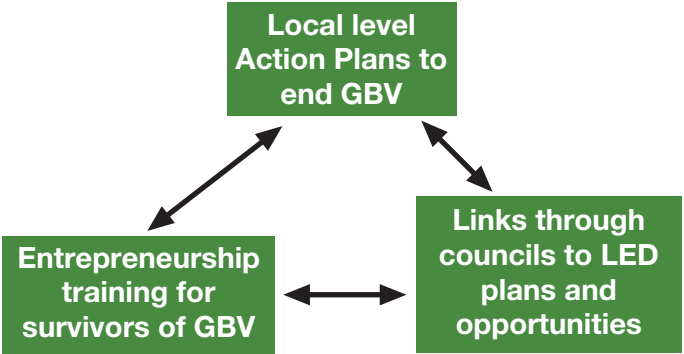
Community realm of power - local government, private sector, NGOs and funders support



Private realm of power - economic GBV as a form of control

Intimate realm of power - creating a belief in ability to achieve economic independence

The programme focuses on an integrated approach of life skills and entrepreneurship training including confidence building; decision making, business management, use of IT, networking and addressing the underlying structural inequalities between women and men. Informed by the ecological theory of change, the project aims at addressing power relations at an individual, personal relationship, community and societal levels.



The main beneficiaries of the programme were identified from 11 councils that form part of the Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government in South Africa. These are Bitou, Blouberg, Cape Aghulas, Emfuleni, George, Matzikama, Midvaal, Mossel Bay, Phalaborwa, Witzenberg, and Vhembe. Altogether councils provided in excess of R240000 in support of the entrepreneurship programme across the councils in kind through the provision of venues.

Key results

Some important outcomes are demonstrated in the personal accounts of participants through “I” stories and interviews and some are summarised in the following stories.

One of the key aims was to achieve increases in **income for the participants**: “I have learned that one has to budget first before spending money. My spending behaviour has improved and I avoid buying things that are unnecessary. I am currently selling my goods on a cash basis or my

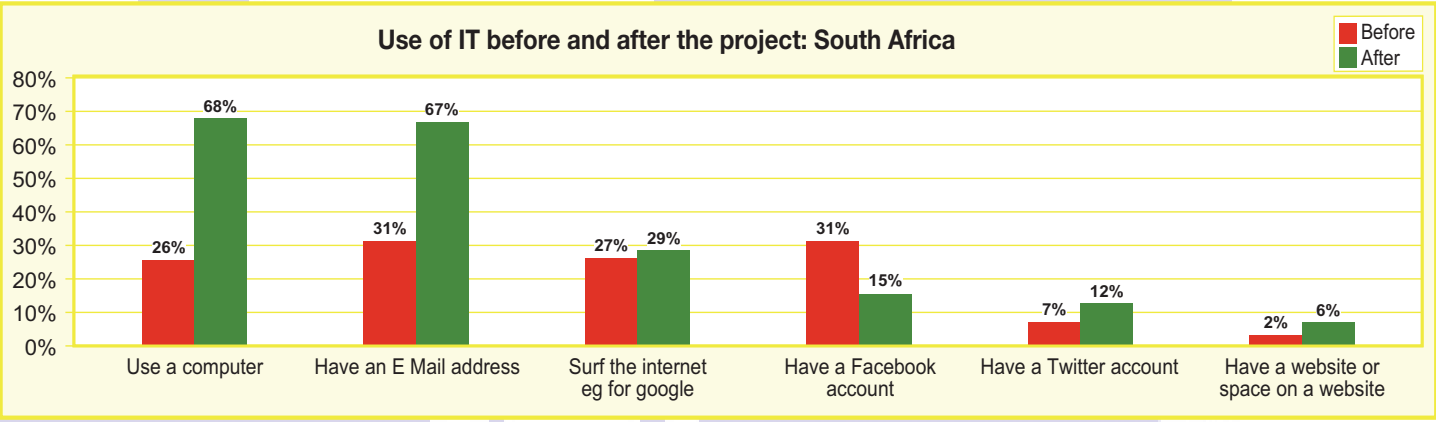
customers must at least give me a deposit before I release goods. Before these workshops I was selling sweets and cigarettes but currently I am selling beauty products, ladies hand bags and also loan people money. We were taught to save proceeds from the business and to refrain from using the money we have made.”
Eva* from Phalaborwa

Prior to the project some of the women were already running small businesses and there has been testimony that they have **improved the way they run their businesses or started a business with more potential**: “I found the training very helpful and interesting. The most useful thing about the training was that I was taught how to save money from a business. This was a major lesson for me and I can see the improvement. Before I attended the training I had a small business selling cool drinks and airtime at my house. In June 2015 I started to venture into a new business of renting out rooms. I am hoping to finish the building of all the rooms by June 2016. So far I have built two rooms with bathrooms to rent out. It was at the Gender Links workshop where I got the information and the encouragement to build these rooms. I am managing to do this project all by myself”.
*Maria Mathebula from Phalaborwa

One of the main aims of the project was to **increase survivor's personal agency** and many have indicated positive changes in their relationships as a result: “Since doing the Gender Links training I can now sit down with my husband, talk about any issue and he does not get angry like he used to. The family is happy that I persevered through difficulties and they have learned from my new way of dealing with problems; to talk to people and not bottle problems inside. I am managing to raise my children with my small business and also I am proud of the person I have become. My training has also given me the confidence to help others. I created a support group where woman share their problems and give each other advice on how to work through their problems.”
*Vuyela Khomo from Blouberg



The group of women in Phalaborwa during the first training workshop. Credit: Susan Mogari



Source: Gender Links.

The programme brought about a change in **IT skills**. As illustrated in the graph, 67% of the women now use a computer compared to 31% at the start of the project. 68% have access to E Mail (compared to 26% at the start). 29% surf the internet (compared to 27% at the start). 12% of the women indicated that they now have a Twitter handle as opposed to 7% at the inception of the project. There was a small increase in website usage from 2% to 6% at the end of the programme. The use of a Facebook account however dropped from 31% to 15%.

* denotes a pseudonym as the participant does not want to be identified.

The programme has helped Centres of Excellence for Gender in local government to **improve their gender action plans**: “Since signing the SADC gender protocol; the council has had a supportive attitude towards ending GBV. There have been supportive attitudes towards women's economic empowerment as a result of the entrepreneurship project and council policies have been put in place that are gender mainstreamed and gender aware. Council has created forums and spaces in which people in the entrepreneurship groups have access to needed services. For the future council intends in all of the overall policies and strategic

plans to incorporate gender sensitive planning with a newly formed women's strategic group.”

Edward Jantjies of the Mossel Bay municipality

This project has shown that there is a possibility of ending GBV through a combination of life skills and entrepreneurship development within a framework of community and local participation to change lives and mainstream women. The project has also shown that using a multi-stakeholder approach is key to ending GBV at individual level, family and community levels.

Lessons learned and how they will be applied

- The choosing of councils needs to be based on their resources and commitment to support the project and the participants.
- There is a need to consider the distances between councils to optimise interaction and cost efficiencies during the project.
- Working closely with Gender focal persons and locking in their commitment for better results is important.
- The introducing of communities of business women and peer mentorship for learning, sharing and networking.

- There is a need to choose participants more carefully and support them holistically for the workshop period to maximise the impact of the training.
- Identifying potential sources of funding has been difficult and needs to be a focus issue with each new council and as a key issue in the post 2015 agenda for the economic mainstreaming of women in SADC.



Participants in Midvaal Municipality learning to use computers during the training.
Credit: Ntombi Mbadlanyana

KEY INDICATORS

Indicator	Botswana	Lesotho	Madagascar	Mauritius	Mozambique	Namibia	South Africa	Swaziland	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Regional total or average
Survivor participation (in Phase 3)	109	130	154	105	220	128	81	140	133	150	1,350
Completed a business plan	100%	99%	96%	81%	80%	95%	79%	81%	98%	98%	91%
Followed a business plan	56%	92%	90%	64%	72%	89%	54%	72%	87%	96%	79%
Average monthly income before the project (Rands)	94	237	495	75	11	105	-124	206	763	614	270
Average monthly income after the project (Rands)	502	593	951	434	13	611	532	350	1,983	1,731	796
Increase in average monthly income after training (Rands)	408	356	456	359	2	506	656	144	1,220	1,117	526
Overall increase in income over one year as a result of the project (Rands)	475,680	533,412	1,597,008	374,808	30,399	974,640	542,892	327,960	2,878,644	3,054,120	10,789,563
Personal agency at the start	74%	72%	81%	83%	76%	69%	74%	71%	76%	77%	76%
Personal agency after the project	79%	76%	84%	83%	73%	73%	77%	74%	77%	80%	78%
Increase or decrease in personal agency	5%	4%	3%	0	-3%	4%	3%	3%	1%	3%	2%
Relationship control at the start	70%	49%	65%	65%	69%	65%	65%	63%	50%	52%	62%
Relationship control after the project	82%	60%	70%	68%	73%	64%	65%	68%	60%	54%	66%
Increase or decrease in relationship control	12%	11%	5%	3%	4%	-1%	0	5%	10%	2%	4%
GBV less or much less	96%	93%	94%	92%	66%	81%	74%	86%	97%	91%	85%
Gender Progress Scores in community (baseline in brackets)	62% (61%)	73% (66%)	65% (65%)	57% (56%)	67% (56%)	60% (59%)	62% (65%)	64% (57%)	59% (61%)	61% (59%)	63% (61%)
Gender Progress Score of participants	75%	66%	73%	82%	64%	65%	72%	70%	71%	70%	70%
Contribution in kind from councils (Rands)	718,728	391,000	338,921	1,711,729	32	164,342	10,000	540,900	1,083,722	975,907	5,935,281
Rating of council support	44%	38%	70%	50%	70%	50%	38%	56%	52%	76%	54%
Overall rating of the project	92%	84%	87%	92%	95%	82%	84%	84%	89%	90%	89%

Source: Gender Links.

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