



Voice and Choice Summit 2026-Story of Change Category

Southern Africa: Threads of Change, from stiches to success

South Africa, KwaZulu Natal, 15-17 March 2026

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Synopsis– brief overview what this is about

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Category	STORY OF CHANGE
Summary	<p>This presentation highlights a sewing skills program implemented under the Women of the South Speak Out Fellowship in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. That empowered women especially Genders Based Violence survivors, through training, mentorship and employment opportunities. It highlights successes, lesson learned, challenges and plans to scale up and sustain the program impact.</p>

Background(problem, actions, change, evidence)

Give some background. Briefly describe the context or problem.

- This project was implemented under the WOSSO fellowship in Pietermaritzburg Kwazulu-Natal, focusing on Vulindlela and Plessislaer. Many women especially GBV survivors, lack skills and income opportunities, making it difficult to leave abusive situations.
- The issue was addressed by introducing a sewing skills training programme tnta provided practical training and mentorship.
- Twelve (12) women participated and gained sewing skills. Two(2) women from the Plessislaer group, **Sebenzile Mkhwanazi and Nelisiwe Gwala** were employed, showing the positive impact of the program on women's economic empowerment.



Background

Briefly describe the context or problem the project set out to address.

- The project was implemented in the Plessislaer area of Pietermaritzburg, Kwazulu Natal, south Africa.
- The project was supported by the Women of The South Speak Out. It aimed to address the challenges faced by women who are survivors of GBV , many of whom remain in abusive relationships due to lack of skills and financial independence.
- The project focused on GBV awareness, skills development trainings and economic empowerment, with key objectives of equipping participants with basic sewing skills and preparing them for employment or entrepreneurship opportunities.



Context

- The project was implemented in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, specifically in the Vulindlela and Plessislaer areas
- The most affected were women especially survivors of Gender based violence(GBV), who lacked skills and income opportunities, making it difficult for them to become financially independent.
- The project addressed GBV, unemployment and lack of skills by providing sewing skills training and mentorship to empower women with opportunities for employment or small business.



Actions

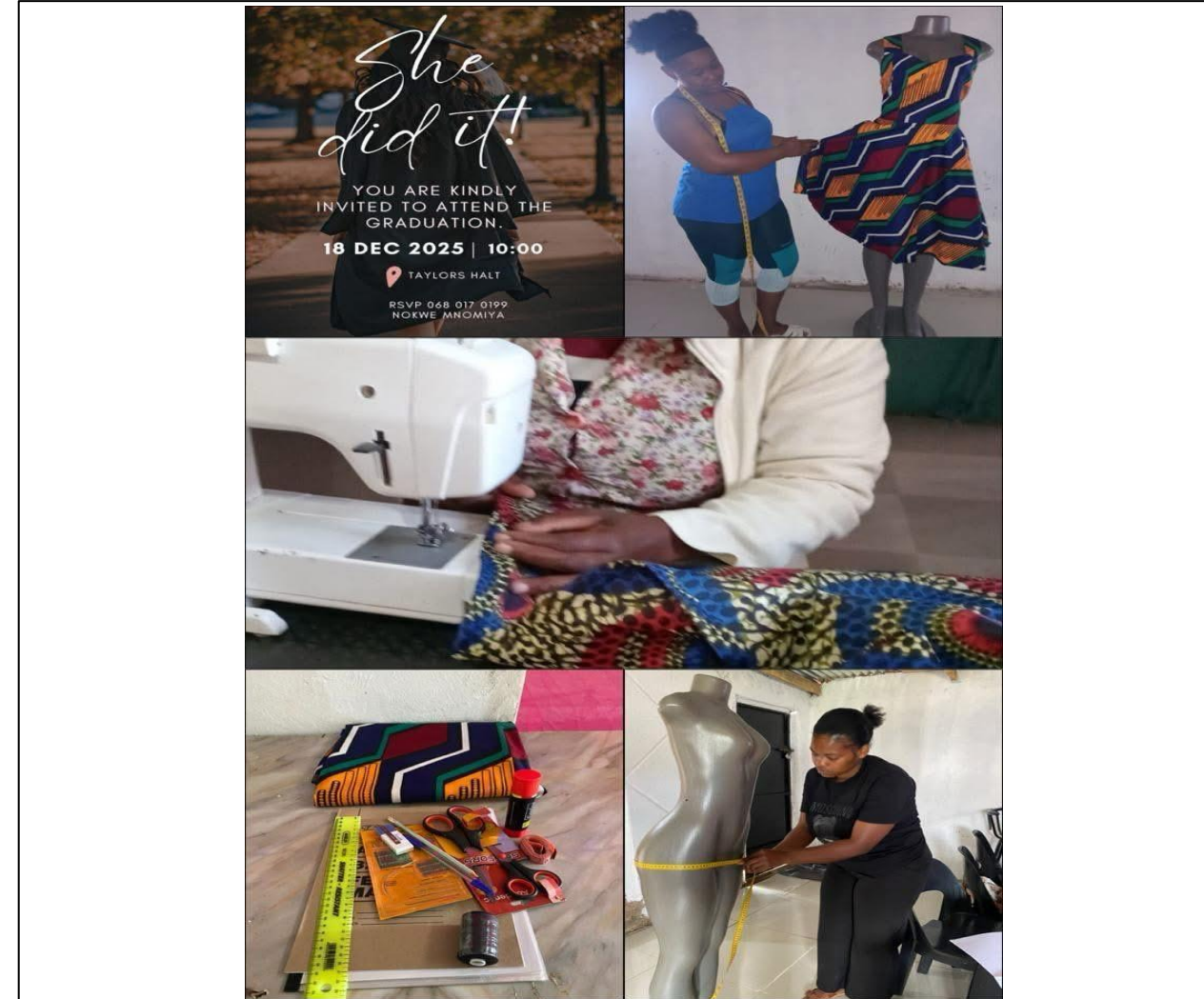
How did the change come about?

- A sewing skills training programme was introduced to empower women with practical skills.
- The program provided hands on training, mentorship and guidance to women from Vulindlela and Plessislaer.
- The program was led by WOSSO Fellow, Nokwethemba Mnomiya in collaboration with Mr Ngubane from Ukukhanya koMzansi Academy and Ms Madlala from Amasishi Unique Fashion.
- Participants successfully completed the training and received certificates. **Sebenzile Mkhwanazi** was recognized as the best achiever and received an award together with her certificate of completion.



The change – impact

- The change was that women gained sewing skills and employment opportunities through the sewing skills training program.
- The change was positive, as women gained practical skills, confidence and opportunities for income. Two participants from Plessislaer, **Sebenzile Mkhwanazi** and **Nelisiwe Gwala**, were even employed on the day of their graduation.
- The women benefited by gaining skills confidence and better chances of employment or starting small businesses.
- Currently , participants are using skills they learned to seek employment and support themselves and their families.



Significance of the Change

- This change shows that providing practical skills can help women become financially independent and reduce their vulnerability to GBV. It supports the movement goal of empowering women and improving their livelihoods.
- This outcome encourages expanding similar programs in the future, supporting more women with skills training, mentorship and opportunities for employment or small businesses.



Beneficiaries

	Number of participants
Female – Direct beneficiaries	12
Male – Direct beneficiaries	0
Female – Indirect beneficiaries (e.g. through other networks)	12
Male – Indirect beneficiaries (e.g. through other networks)	0
Female – Online beneficiaries (e.g. website access, mailing lists, scholarly articles)	0
Male – Online beneficiaries (e.g. website access, mailing lists, scholarly articles)	0
Total	12

Challenges & Lessons learnt

Challenges & mitigation

- Lack of funding to continue with the program :

Seek partnership with NGOs, donors and local business to support and sustain the program.

- Limited resources such as sewing machines and material.

Work with partners and community stakeholders to access equipment and material.

- Some participants lack confidence to start working.

Provide ongoing mentorship and support to build confidence and skills

I have learned that empowering women with practical skills and mentorship can create real, positive change in their lives. Even small opportunities like learning the sewing skills, can improve confidence, open doors to employment, and help women support themselves and their families.

I have also learned the importance of partnerships, dedication and ongoing support to ensure the impact of program is sustainable and reaches more women in the community.

Sustainability

- To sustain the work:
 1. Graduates continue to receive mentorship and support.
 2. Employed participants encouraged to train other women.
 3. Partnerships with local organisations provide resources and guidance.
- The program aims to:
 1. Expand to more communities.
 2. Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and funders.
 3. Encourage mentorship to reach more women.
 4. Improve the program to increase employment and business opportunities.



Next Steps

- The next plans are to expand the sewing skills program to reach more women in Vulindlela, Plessislaer and nearby communities.
- Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and funders for support.
- Encourage graduate to mentor new participants and continuously improve the program to increase employment and small business opportunities for women.

THANK YOU...