

**RENEWED WOMEN'S VOICE AND LEADERSHIP – REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
AFRICA REGION
PROJECT NUMBER: P013048**



GENDER LINKS SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

REPORTING PERIOD: 01 APRIL 2025– 30 SEPTEMBER 2025



Cover photo: Lets Talks group participants at the award ceremony hosted by the Bethlehem Child and Family Welfare Society in the Free-State Province. Photo: Patricia Kharafu

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1. PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title	Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership – South Africa
Project Number	P013048
Name of Implementing Partner(s)	Gender Links
Reporting Period	01 April 2025– 30 September 2025
Date of the Report	2025
Implementing Partner Contact Information	Nomthandazo Mankazana +27 67 738 4113
Total Project Budget	Six million Canadian dollars (CAN \$6,000,000)
Project start and end date	31 March 2028

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the second half of year two of the Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership (RWVL) project in South Africa. Despite a severe domestic funding crisis and a challenging operational environment, the project has empowered grantees to achieve significant milestones. Gender Links also strategically leveraged South Africa's G20 presidency to advance feminist advocacy on global and national stages.

Gender Links proactively engaged with South Africa's G20 presidency to inject a Southern African feminist perspective into global policy by contributions to W20 (Women's 20), Q20 (Queer20) Through the Marang LGBTQIA+ Fund, advocated for the rights of LBTQI+ individuals, highlighting how race, poverty, and geography compound discrimination. This served as a critical counter to regressive international policy shifts. RWVL through GL further ensured that civil society voices from the Global South were central to discussion with C20 (Civil 20) & the People's Summit.

Some key achievements during this reporting period include:

- **Pillar 1- Organisational Sustainability:** Grantees demonstrated increased resilience, securing an additional R6.2 million (81% of disbursed funds) from other donors, with the Forum from the Empowerment of Women moving from one donor to ten. The Gender Links Academy trained 87 grantee staff in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning including Communications for Social Change as well as and Self-Care.
- **Pillar 2- Programming & Advocacy:** Grantees delivered impactful work. The Sasopsbiz Foundation combined skills training in bricklaying with community healing by rebuilding a fire-destroyed home. The new RWVL-WOSSO Fellowship empowered five young feminist leaders for advocacy. The RWVL internship programme is scheduled to start on 1 November
- **Pillar 3- Movement Strengthening:** Grantee-led advocacy groups launched successful joint campaigns. The "Justice Delayed is Justice Denied" panel is developing a policy document and request letter for a meeting with the President's Office to reform the GBV justice system.





The operating context remains difficult, with grantees identifying high-severity risks such as:

- **Funding Instability:** Global donor shifts and PEPFAR cuts have created a severe funding drought for gender justice work.
- **Safety & Security:** Rising violent crime and specific threats against LBTQI+ and feminist activists jeopardize staff and operations.

- **Operational Barriers:** Persistent load-shedding (power cuts), bureaucratic red tape, and poor infrastructure hinder service delivery.

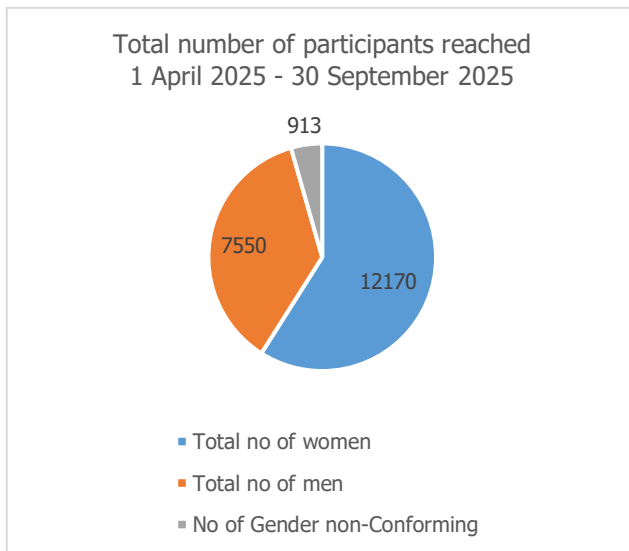
In a complex and constrained environment, the RWVL project is effectively building a more resilient and coordinated feminist ecosystem. By strengthening local organisations and strategically engaging in high-level policy forums like the G20, the project is ensuring that the voices of Southern African women and LBTQI+ communities contribute to a more just and equitable global order.

This report is structured around the project’s results framework and informed by the experience, success, and lessons from the past six months of Year Two. Primary focus is given to the intermediate and immediate outcomes.

Ultimate outcome	1000. Enhanced enjoyment of human rights by women and girls in all their diversity in South Africa				
 Intermediate outcomes	Pillar 1: Organisational capacity and sustainability 1100. Enhanced organisational sustainability of local WROs and LBTQI+ groups in South Africa to deliver on their gender equality mandates.	Pillar 2: Programming and advocacy 1200. Strengthened programming and advocacy of WRO, LBTQI+ groups and women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in South Africa to advance gender equality and empower women and girls.		Pillar 3: Movement Building 1300. Increased effectiveness of sub-national, national, regional, and global women's rights platforms, networks, and alliances to affect policy, legal and social change.	
 Immediate outcomes	1110. Increased ability of supported WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs to leverage financial resources required to deliver on their mandate and strategies.	1120 Increased ability of supported groups to create, monitor and improve organisational processes and systems.	1210 Increased delivery by WRO and LGBTIQ+ groups of transformative intersectional programming and advocacy.	1220 Increased ability of emerging local WROs and LGBTIQ+ groups and WHRD to respond to crises and opportunities.	1310 Increased capacity of feminist networks, alliances and movements to collectively advocate for the rights, interests and participation of women and girls, particularly the structurally excluded in South Africa
 Outputs	1111 Technical assistance provided on increasing complementary funding and in-kind support to WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs in South Africa.	1121 Training in key areas of organizational strengthening provided to leaders and staff of WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs in South Africa	1211 Multiyear core grants supporting gender equality programming provided to WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs in South Africa	1221 Opportunity grants for increasing access to a range of gender responsive services provided to emerging WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs in South Africa	1311 Feminist networks, alliances and movements formed or strengthened. 1312 Learning and sharing summits and facilitated dialogues convened with WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs in South Africa to exchange knowledge, strengthen networks, and document collective experiences.
 Root causes	Patriarchal social norms (values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices) condone and perpetuate unequal power relations between women and men; undermining women's economic, social, legal and political rights; denying them voice, choice and control over their bodies; lives and livelihoods. Post COVID these underlying structural causes have been exacerbated in South Africa by the energy crisis; mounting unemployment; violence and crime that disproportionately affect women and girls.				

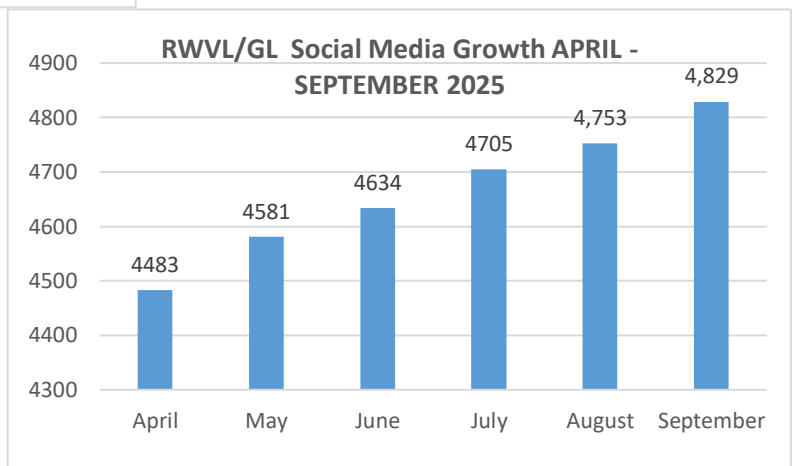
3. DIRECT REACH

The 1000 Women Trust’s social media call to action to "Wear Orange on the 25th of Every Month" has served as a powerful symbolic and strategic tool in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV) in South Africa. Inspired by the global UN campaign to "Orange the World," this monthly action has helped raise awareness, strengthen solidarity, and mobilise ongoing support for survivors and anti-GBV initiatives. It has even resulted in the Department of Social Development participating in this call nationwide in their workplace. -1000 Women Trust



The RWVL program reached 20,680 participants during the reporting period, reflecting inclusive engagement across diverse identities. Women comprised 12,170 (58.9%), men 7,550 (36.5%), gender non-conforming individuals 913 (4.4%), trans persons 18 (0.09%), while 27 (0.13%) preferred not to disclose and 2 (0.01%) selected "identity not mentioned here." This distribution underscores RWVL’s commitment to inclusivity and respect for diverse self-identifications.

The social media growth across RWVL and GL social media platforms is shown in this graph. A steady growth of 373 followers was recorded in the current reporting period. Three social media platforms are shared by RWVL and GL: TikTok (244), YouTube (844), and LinkedIn (1160), meaning that these followers are not only organic to RWVL, unlike those on GL South Africa Facebook (1066), X-formerly Twitter (846), and Instagram (296).



4. CHANGES TO CONTEXT, GOVERNANCE, AND RISKS AFFECTING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

A) Contextual Changes

The past 18 months since the inception of the RWVL project have been characterized by a severe domestic funding crisis and adverse international policy shifts. In this section of the report, the significant and challenging evolution of South Africa's civil society context over the last six-month reporting period is outlined, along with the role that has been undertaken by Gender Links’ Grant Making Unit in ensuring that Women’s Rights Organisations are involved in key government processes.



GL strategically leveraged South Africa’s historic G20 presidency, engaging with W20 (Women 20), C20 (Civil 20), Q20 (Queer20), and the inaugural Social Summit to advocate for a feminist agenda from a Southern African perspective. Through W20, GL advanced priorities such as rural women’s inclusion, informal economy workers, and GBV survivors, supported by research on gender equality, care work, entrepreneurship, and local governance.

In C20, GL amplified Global South civil society voices, contributing African data and accountability mechanisms to gender equality discussions. Engagement with Q20, through the EU-funded Marang LGBTQIA+ Fund, reinforced intersectional feminism and aligned with Global Affairs Canada’s feminist assistance policy. GL highlighted compounded discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals—especially in rural and informal settlements—linking inclusion to G20 themes of Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability.



LGBTQIA+ Flag at the Cape Town Pride Festival in Western Cape province. Photo [Facebook](#)



This advocacy counters global regression following restrictive policies such as Donald Trump’s executive orders on sex and sexuality, ensuring South Africa’s constitutional values are defended internationally. GL also participates in the [We the 99 People’s Summit](#) (20–22 Nov 2025, Constitution Hill), a civil society-led alternative to the G20, amplifying marginalized voices and reclaiming democratic space.

Domestically, RWVL through GL engages in the National Dialogue, a citizen-led process launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in June 2025 to reset South Africa’s trajectory. The first National Convention (15–16 Aug 2025, UNISA) convened diverse stakeholders, with subsequent dialogues planned across communities and sectors. RWVL grantees will facilitate grassroots participation without diverting allocated funds, ensuring inclusivity despite resource challenges.



UNISA hosted the two-day convention for the National Dialogue at its main campus in Pretoria. Picture: [@Governments/X](#)

In essence, GL acts as a bridge between local realities and global policy arenas, embedding feminist principles and intersectional inclusion in national and international decision-making. This sustained advocacy defends progressive constitutional values and promotes a more just, equitable global order.

B) Governance and project management changes

GL issued a call for communications and MEL internships, with three interns joining RWVL in November. The core team remains unchanged: Programme Manager, Grants & Networking Coordinator, and Grants & Compliance Officer, supported by the Special Advisor, M&E Manager, and Communications Officer. Additional support comes from the Regional Hub Director, Chief Financial Officer, and People Lead Manager.

Meetings with Global Affairs Canada

Regular six-week sessions with Global Affairs Canada (GAC) continue, providing real-time updates, guidance, and budget approvals. Leslie Campbell has been responsive during Andisiwe Gcali's maternity leave. These meetings focus on governance and implementation processes.

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The PSC met in May 2025 to review progress, challenges, and collaboration opportunities. Chaired by GL with GAC as observer, attendees included UN Women, Hlanganisa, Ford Foundation, New Heritage Foundation, Trans Hope, Sasopsbiz, and Sonke Gender Justice. Key issues: funding delays, risk management, and capacity gaps among smaller grantees. Emphasis was placed on training, mentorship, and transparent communication.

Table 1: Comparative analysis of GL grantees to GBVF Response Fund, Sonke Gender Justice and Hlanganisa grantees:

	Current	Previous	# common	% common
Gender Links Grantees	48			
GBVF Response Fund grantees	12	15	27	56%
Sonke Gender Justice	1	2	3	6%
Hlanganisa grantees	2	3	5	10%
Total	15	20	35	73%

The table above shows the number of grantees that are currently being funded by the RWVL project. Of 48 RWVL grantees, 31% are currently co-funded by other partners; 42% were previously funded. Overall, 73% overlap exists among GL, GBVF, Sonke, and Hlanganisa, underscoring the need for coordination. This table shows the importance of enhanced coordination and joint initiatives among funders in the women's rights sector. The agreed collaborative actions from the meeting include:

- Develop shared contact databases of women's rights organizations.
- Explore joint training, capacity building, and networking programs.
- Strengthen policy influence through coordinated advocacy.
- Share resources and data to streamline due diligence and reduce duplication.
- Consider joint learning events and impact evaluations.
- Gender Links to lead in establishing common digital platforms and resource centres.

C) Changes in risk

Grantees submitted their first six months' report during this reporting period. The risks identified by the grantees are interconnected and often exacerbate one another. While organizations demonstrate remarkable resilience and creativity in their mitigation strategies, the severity of the risks is generally high, indicating a significant threat to project continuity, staff well-being, and organizational survival.

Table 2: Risk identification

Risk	Severity	Strategic Mitigation Priorities
EXTERNAL		
<p>Financial & funding instability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global and national funding cuts and shrinking donor funds (e.g., PEPFAR/USAID cuts). A direct impact on SRHR services, HIV prevention programs, and GBV initiatives in South Africa. 2. Shifts in donor priorities away from gender justice. 3. International donors redirecting their attention and resources to other regions or internally, or scaling back on funding gender-specific work in South Africa. 4. Inflation and cost of living increases. 	High	<p>Grantee & GL mitigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collective advocacy for core funding. 2. Diversification of income streams (earned revenue, local philanthropy). 3. GL will encourage grantees to continue to be innovative and adaptable in their program design are being highlighted as strengths to appeal to donor priorities. 4. GL will continue to mobilize support from alternative donors, including Canada, the European Union, and private philanthropic foundations.
<p>Safety and security risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rising violent crimes, gang activity, and burglaries. 2. Digital and physical threats to activists (esp. LGBTQI+ and feminist groups). 3. Political intimidation and community backlash. 	High	<p>Grantee mitigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grantees will implement sector-wide safety protocols in their areas of work 2. Grantees will continue to collaboration with community safety networks. 3. GL will continue to advocate for collective advocacy for protection women human rights defenders and activists.
<p>Contextual and political risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Weak or corrupt local governance structures. 2. Policy uncertainty (e.g., GBVF Council Act challenge). 3. Anti-gender and right-wing movements rising. 4. Cultural and religious resistance to gender justice. 	High	<p>Grantee mitigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen alliances with reform-minded CSOs. 2. Localize advocacy (provincial and municipal engagement). 3. Invest in trust-building with communities.
<p>Operational & Infrastructure Context:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unreliable public utilities (electricity, water, transport). 2. Bureaucratic red tape with government institutions. 3. Geographic and logistical barriers to reach remote areas. 	Medium–High	<p>Grantee mitigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investment in alternative infrastructure (solar, generators). 2. Build local partnerships to navigate bureaucracy. 3. Use hybrid and decentralized models.
<p>Grantee non-compliance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grantee non-performance and misleading finance reporting. 	Medium	<p>GL mitigation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GL will conduct investigations through a full document verification audit to check expenditure to date and with-hold payments for grantees who do not meet the reporting requirements. 2. GL will ensure that they follow-up with grantees on a monthly basis to ensure that implementation is on track

Risk	Severity	Strategic Mitigation Priorities
INTERNAL		
Funding cuts: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GL sustainability affected by funding cuts 	Medium	GL Mitigation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GL has a robust GL services team and have introduced a fundraising KPI for all staff to assist with fundraising.
Human Resource & Capacity Constraints: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High emotional workload and burnout. Leadership turnover and institutional knowledge loss. 2. Overlapping roles in small teams. 3. Volunteer dependency. 	High	Grantee mitigation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal HR policies and succession planning. 2. Regular psychosocial support and wellness programs. 3. Capacity-building for mid-level leadership.
Programmatic & Community Engagement Risks: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misaligned community expectations (e.g., financial incentives). 2. Beneficiary withdrawal and low participation. 3. Sensitivity of content (GBV, LGBTQI+). 	Medium	Grantee mitigation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparent communication and expectation management. 2. Context-driven adaptation. 3. Local facilitation and participatory design.
Technological and M&E Limitations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of access to digital tools and internet. 2. Incomplete M&E systems and weak data tracking. 3. Digital inequality among staff and beneficiaries. 	Medium	Grantee mitigation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in low-cost digital tools and data collection. 2. Build digital literacy within teams. 3. Integrate hybrid (online/offline) M&E approaches.
Operational Management Challenges: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inefficient coordination across expanding projects. 2. Reactive rather than strategic planning. 3. Inconsistent application of compliance systems. 	Medium–High	Grantee mitigation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institutionalize planning, risk tracking, and compliance audits. 2. Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs). 3. Strengthen internal communication systems.

5.RWVL PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Pillar 1: Organizational Capacity and Sustainability (Organisational development)

Intermediate outcome 1100: Enhanced sustainability of local WROs and LBTQI+ groups to deliver their gender equality mandates

The institutional capacity, resilience, and long-term viability of women’s rights and LBTQI+ organizations are focused on by the Enhanced Sustainability of Local WROs and LBTQI+ Groups under the RWVL project, to ensure that gender equality and social justice are effectively advanced. Through targeted capacity-building, mentorship, resource mobilization training, and networking opportunities, funding sources have been diversified, governance has been improved, and program delivery has been enhanced by these organizations.

Stronger advocacy movements that are community-rooted and adaptive to changing contexts have been built through the fostering of collaboration and knowledge sharing. Local WROs and LBTQI+ groups have been empowered not only to sustain their operations but also to amplify their collective voice and influence in policy and social spaces, ensuring that gains in gender equality are inclusive and enduring.

Immediate outcome 1110. Increased ability of supported WROs, LBTQI+ groups, and WHRDs to leverage financial resources required to deliver on their mandate and strategies.

The table below shows that through the RWVL project’s capacity building, due diligence processes, and provision of reference letters (8 grantees) and sharing of funding opportunities, grantees have significantly enhanced their ability to mobilize additional resources to sustain and expand their gender equality work. The project’s structured mentorship and institutional strengthening support has enabled several Women’s Rights Organizations (WROs) and LBTQI+ groups to meet the stringent compliance and accountability standards required by other donors, resulting in a total of R6,376,299.40 or 81% in additional funds raised.

Table 3: Analysis of disbursements vs amount raised

	<i>Exchange rate R12.91</i>		% of funds raised
Amount Disbursed	CAD\$ 612,199.86	R 7,903,500.19	81%
Amount raised	CAD \$ 480,615.34	R 6,204,744.00	
Variance	CAD \$ 131,584.52	R1,698,756.19	

Of the disbursed funds grantees have managed to raise an additional 81% worth of funds since RWVL within the first 6 months of the project implementation.

Table 4: Funds raised by grantees by Funder

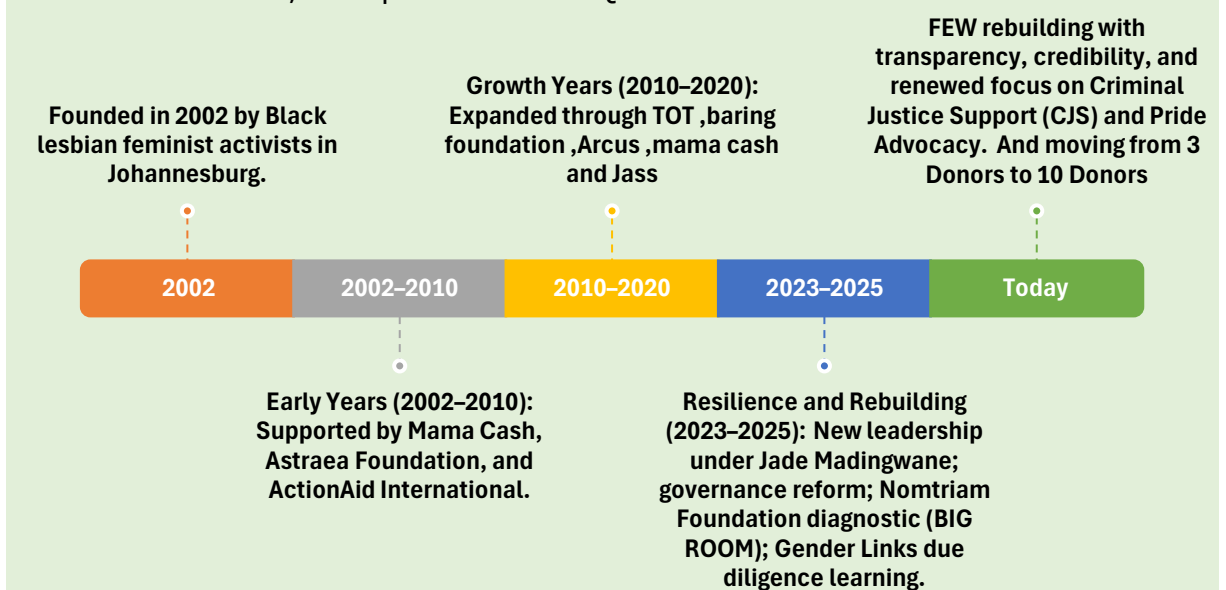
Organisation	Funder	Amount raised	Start date	End date	Purpose of the grant
Gender Rights in Tech		R178,362.00			Training for CSOs on TFGBV
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	CTAOP	R895,000.00	1 August 2025	31 July 2026	Breaking Barriers for Rural Queer Leaders
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	Baring Foundation	R394,000.00	01 June 2025	31 July 2026	Creation of mental health and Criminal Justice system toolkit
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	TOF	R1,200,000.00	01 April 2025	30 March 2028	Soweto Pride
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	TOF but sits with the LBQ Network	R394,000.00	01 Aug 2025	31 July 2026	Advocacy
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	Outright International	R283,000.00	01 May 2025	30 June 2026	LBQ and Trans Feminist Narrative change
Forum for the Empowerment of Women	TOF but sits with the LBQ Network	R1,432,100.00	01 Jan 2026	31 December 2028	Core Grant
1000 Women Trust	Allen Gray	R500,000.00	25 June 2025	30 June 2026	Operational cost not covered by other funders
National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities	Alstom Foundation	R438,210.00	1 Feb 2025	31 December 2025	Strengthen EWA Programme
Taboobreaker Association / SA NPC		R178,672.00	01 June 2025	01 August 2025	Organisational Capacity Development.
Resoketswe Lebjane Foundation	Soul City	R140,000.00	1 June 2025	30 May 2026	
Tosunga Banninga	Heinrich Boll Stiftung Cape Town	R21,400.00	1 May 2025	31 May 2025	Community Dialogue on SGBVF, Rape Culture, and Silence in Churches
Tosunga Banninga	Hlanganisa	R171 400.00	28 November 2024	21 December 2024	Organisational operational cost and raising SGBVF through stories
Tosunga Banninga	Barloworld Empowerment Foundation	R150,000.00	28 November 2024	31 December 2024	Organisational operational cost and raising SGBVF awareness through stories
Total funds raised		R6,376,299.40			

Table 4 above shows the funds raised by grantees. Gender Rights in Tech obtained R178,362 to conduct training for CSOs on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), while 1000 Women Trust raised R500,000 to support operational costs not covered by other funders. Similarly, The Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) secured multiple grants totalling over R4 million, including funding for initiatives such as *Breaking Barriers for Rural Queer Leaders* (R895,000), *Creation of a Mental Health and Criminal Justice System Toolkit* (R394,000), and a multi-year *Soweto Pride* grant worth R1.2 million. FEW also received a substantial core grant of R1,432,100, reflecting increased donor confidence in its institutional capacity.

Other organizations, such as the National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities, secured R438,210 to strengthen the *Empowered Women in Action (EWA)* programme, while Tabobreaker Association/SA NPC obtained R178,672 for organizational capacity development. Resoketswe Lebjane Foundation and Tosunga Banninga also benefited, raising R140,000 and R171,400 respectively for community dialogues, awareness raising, and operational support.

An Inspirational Case Study on Growth, Resilience, and Rebuilding Trust: The story of FEW

Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) was founded with a bold vision: to amplify feminist voices and challenge systemic gender inequities in South Africa. Guided by its mission to empower marginalized women and gender-diverse communities, the organization quickly established itself as a safe space for activism, dialogue, and advocacy. The early years were characterized by passion-driven volunteerism and limited resources, but a clear feminist vision anchored FEW's work, to empower black LGBTQ women.



FEW's early development focused on earning legitimacy within both civil society and donor communities. The organization's Board of Directors played a pivotal role in strengthening governance, accountability, and financial management systems, foundational elements that would later attract funders. The board's strategic oversight helped FEW professionalize its internal systems, improving reporting, compliance, and program documentation. These steps gradually shifted FEW's image from an activist collective to a credible partner capable of managing donor investments responsibly.

Funding Trajectory: From First Grant to Present



Placards and visuals from Soweto Pride. Photo: FEW

FEW's fundraising journey can be divided into three distinct phases:

Phase 1: Initial Grants – Building the Foundation

FEW began with modest, short-term grants for advocacy and community outreach. These early funds enabled pilot programs in gender justice and feminist leadership, earning donor confidence through visible grassroots impact.

Phase 2: Diversification and Growth

As its reputation grew, FEW expanded from local donors to regional and international partnerships, including feminist funds. Multi-year proposals and donor dialogues prioritized sustainability. Impact reporting through data, stories, and community voices became a key strength.

Phase 3: Resilience and Rebuilding Trust

Facing financial uncertainty and shifting priorities, FEW strengthened governance, improved accountability, and rebuilt funder relationships. Transparent communication and program excellence restored confidence, positioning FEW as a resilient, adaptive feminist organization.

Lessons Learned

FEW's fundraising journey offered several critical lessons for feminist and community-based organizations:

- **Trust is fragile** — transparency and accountability are non-negotiable.
- **Visibility drives credibility** — data and stories foster donor confidence.
- **Diversification is sustainability** — mix grants, institutional donors, and earned income.
- **Governance matters** — strong boards drive ethical leadership.
- **Partnerships amplify impact** — collaboration strengthens advocacy and funding.

FEW's team exemplifies feminist leadership, combining activism and innovation to navigate uncertainty. Their adaptability and collective energy transformed FEW from a struggling grassroots initiative into a respected feminist organization within South Africa's civil society.

Looking ahead, FEW aims to:

- Secure core and flexible funding to sustain long-term feminist organizing.
- Strengthen its institutional infrastructure and knowledge management systems.
- Expand its reach through partnerships, feminist learning hubs, and digital advocacy.
- Continue to mentor emerging feminist leaders and community activists.

FEW's fundraising journey reflects the broader challenges and triumphs of feminist organizing in South Africa: navigating funding volatility, rebuilding after crisis, and remaining unapologetically political in its pursuit of justice. Through resilience, transparency, and collaboration, FEW has not only restored donor confidence but also redefined what sustainable feminist funding looks like.



Soweto Pride Festivities aerial view. Photo: FEW

By improving governance, accountability, and visibility, and by offering credible reference support, the project has positioned local WROs and LGBTQI+ organizations as trusted partners capable of sustaining their gender equality mandates well beyond RWVL’s direct funding.

In-kind contributions

Women’s Rights Organisations have secured in-kind support valued at R1,535,472.71 through strategic partnerships. Costello Medical UK has committed to developing an Impact Map, an M&E framework, and a Theory of Change for Taboobreakers Association, including co-development workshops. Tosunga Banninga received assistance from Co-Create Communications for concept note and proposal development, while the Yes Programme contributed stipends for ten tutors and coaches to Nyara Youth Development. Other contributions include venues, transport, and office rent, as well as monthly food donations from SA Food for Callas Foundation’s daily feeding scheme. Thusanang Trauma Centre also received food and toiletries for Mandela Day.

“Staff in the disability centres assist in preparing refreshments for participants during community dialogues at no costs. We are unable to quantify as we have not been paying volunteers for the services done in support of LMHS activities”.
Limpopo Mental Health Society

% of in-kind support received by category



Although the total value of in-kind contributions has not yet been fully calculated, grantees often struggle to capture these contributions accurately. Current estimates indicate that the largest portion, 54%, falls under the category of “other,” which includes training, proposals, and food. Volunteers account for 33%, a figure expected to rise as tracking improves, while transport represents nine percent, venues three percent, and office rent one percent.

In the next quarter, RWVL will focus on helping grantees properly document in-kind contributions. The team will continue providing reference letters, sharing funding opportunities, and supporting proposal reviews. In November, GL through the GL Academy will offer a course on fundraising and sustainability to strengthen governance and equip grantees with the skills needed to leverage additional resources.

“Very difficult to quantify exactly. Staff have volunteered 40% and then 60% of their time due to our financial crisis”, *We Will Speak Out South Africa*

Immediate Outcome 1120 Increased ability of supported groups to create, monitor and improve organisational processes and systems.

The Organisational Development Scorecard (ODS) is a tool that is administered annually to track progress and measure organisational growth throughout the programme cycle. It is both a self-assessment and external assessment tool designed to evaluate the institutional capacity, readiness, and growth of grantee organisations. It helps identify strengths and capacity gaps across key functional areas such as governance, financial management, programming, and advocacy. The ODS results reveal that RWVL grantees have made notable progress in strengthening institutional capacity while also highlighting areas requiring targeted support. Across all areas, a consistent perception gap emerged between grantees’ self-assessments and the Gender Links (GL) Team’s evaluations, indicating differing perspectives on organisational effectiveness and areas of growth, see *Annex 7* for the complete ODS report.



The graph above shows the differences in scores between the grantees and the GL team as well as the agreed score. The following section analysis the scores under the five categories and the mitigation of the identified gaps through the GL academy, the sections can be read together with the ODS report (*Annex 7*). In **People and Leadership**, grantees scored themselves at 88% versus GL's 75%, citing clarity of vision and strong staff engagement. GL noted governance weaknesses, including board effectiveness and inclusivity in decision-making. **Structures, Systems, and Processes** averaged 82%, though grantees rated 89% against GL's 69%. Strengths included strategic alignment and fairness, while gaps emerged in Monitoring and Evaluation, particularly indicator tracking and learning integration. **Resilience, Care, and Security** scored 80%, with grantees at 82% and GL at 69%. While missions remain relevant and inclusion efforts commendable, GL flagged the absence of wellness budgets and plans. **Financial Sustainability and Social Entrepreneurship** achieved 78%, reflecting robust financial systems but ongoing donor dependency and limited income diversification. **Connections and Visibility** also scored 78%, with strong networking and social media use, though donor engagement and participation in larger advocacy networks remain constrained by resources.

The ODS findings provide a clear roadmap for targeted interventions through the GL Academy. Training and mentorship will focus on governance, operational systems, wellness planning, and resource mobilisation, ensuring evidence-based, responsive support that consolidates strengths and addresses critical gaps.

Gender Links Academy (GLA)

The [GL Academy](#) is a dynamic learning hub equipping activists, leaders, and partners with tools to advance gender justice across the Global South and beyond. Its mission is to deliver transformative learning experiences that build leadership, advocacy, and sustainability skills. Through interactive short courses, the Academy blends theory with practice, turning learning into action for lasting impact. Participants strengthen strategies in fundraising, explore gender and climate justice, and develop storytelling and communication skills. The Academy is open to RWVL grantees, Gender Links staff, Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance partners, Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) Africa, and Marang Fund partners.



Table 6: RWVL enrolment in GL Academy

Course	# people enrolled
Fundraising and Sustainability	20
Results and Communications for Change	17
Self-Care and Wellbeing	13
Gender, Inclusion, and Development	13
Gender and Climate Justice	15
Mainstreaming SOGIE: Changing Discourse & Shifting Narratives	9
Total number of registrants	87

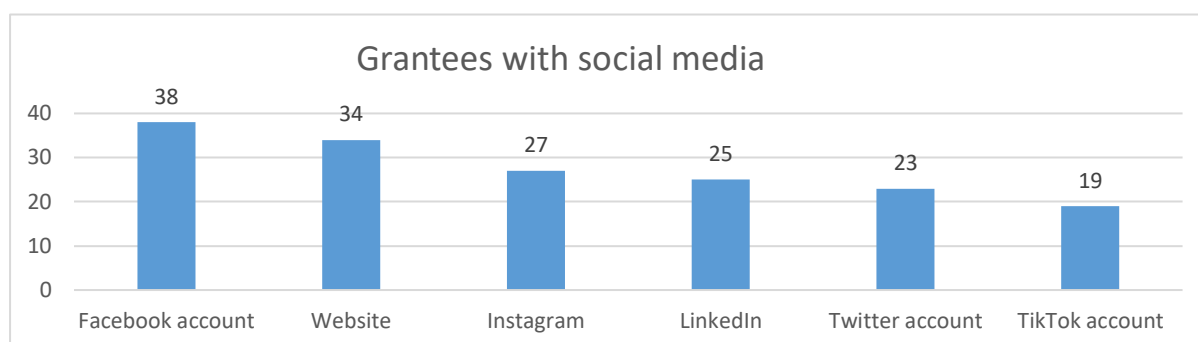
During the reporting period, RWVL grantees actively engaged in GL Academy’s capacity-building courses, with a total of 87 registrations across six thematic areas. The highest participation was recorded in Fundraising and Sustainability, with 20 grantees strengthening skills in resource mobilisation and proposal development. Results and Communications for Change attracted 17 participants, focusing on monitoring, evaluation, and advocacy through digital storytelling. Courses on Gender and Climate Justice and Gender, Inclusion, and Development drew 15 and 13 participants respectively, reflecting strong interest in intersectional approaches to gender equality and climate action. Self-Care and Wellbeing also enrolled 13 grantees, highlighting growing recognition of wellness as essential for sustainable activism. The lowest participation was in Mainstreaming SOGIE: Changing Discourse & Shifting Narratives, with 9 grantees, indicating an area for targeted outreach and capacity building.

This engagement demonstrates RWVL’s commitment to strengthening organisational resilience, advocacy, and leadership through structured learning opportunities. The academy is accessible via a web browser on the [Moodle platform](#) or through a dedicated mobile app, offering flexibility for learners. GL academy offers the following courses:

<p>Gender, Inclusion, and Development This course deepens understanding of gender and inclusion through critical reflection on everyday dynamics. Participants explore diversity, intersectionality, and African feminist perspectives to challenge systemic inequalities at home, work, and in society.</p>	<p>Fundraising and Sustainability Designed to build resilient organizations, this course covers strategic resource mobilization, proposal writing, and navigating the funding landscape. It introduces digital fundraising, donor cultivation, and securing in-kind support to strengthen long-term sustainability.</p>
<p>Self-Care and Wellbeing Focused on holistic wellbeing for activists and leaders, this course frames self-care as essential for sustainable social justice work. Modules address burnout prevention, physical health, mental and emotional resilience, and spiritual purpose.</p>	<p>Gender and Climate Justice This course examines how climate change disproportionately affects women and marginalized groups. Participants analyse these issues through an intersectional feminist lens, explore gendered impacts of energy access and migration, and gain tools for advocacy and campaign design.</p>
<p>Mainstreaming SOGIE: Changing Discourse & Shifting Narratives Participants learn to integrate Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE) across sectors. The course covers foundational concepts, policy mainstreaming, thematic applications, and concludes with advocacy planning, allyship building, and actionable strategies.</p>	<p>Results and Communications for Change This practical course equips participants with tools to monitor impact and communicate effectively. Over four weeks, they learn MEL principles, storytelling through photo essays, blog and press release writing, and strategies for social media advocacy.</p>

The MEL and communications for social change training was a much-needed course as it responded directly to the needs of grantees to communicate effectively through social media. The graph below shows that the grantees preferred social media channel is Facebook, with

38 of the grantees having accounts. 34 of the grantees report having websites, 27 have Instagram accounts, with 25 reporting to have LinkedIn and X accounting for 23 of the social media accounts. TikTok surprisingly has the lowest uptake with 19 grantees reporting having accounts.



Training and Capacity building

The RWVL Initiative supports strengthening WROs through targeted training, capacity building and putting in place organisational systems and processes that are economic, effective and efficient. The team provided on the job-training during grantee site visits. In the second half of Year 2 of implementation the Grants and finance manager will conducting various continued training and support for grantees in need of further finance training. The RWVL manager and grants and Networking coordinator will continue to work with grantees to hone their report writing and provide social media support.

The RWVL team has learned that there is no one approach to capacity building and/or training. GL employs a mixed approach to training:

Table 7: Training types provided by GL

Training Type	Pros	Cons
In-person Workshops: Face-to-face sessions focusing on key skills (e.g., financial management, project planning, leadership).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong interpersonal connection and immediate feedback. • Builds peer networks among grantees. • Easier to facilitate hands-on or experiential learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly (venue, transport, accommodation). • Limited reach for remote participants. • Time-consuming for both trainers and trainees.
Virtual or Online Training: Training sessions delivered via platforms like Zoom, Teams, or Moodle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalable and cost-effective. • Flexible for grantees in different locations. • Sessions can be recorded for later access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires stable internet access. • Lower engagement if sessions are too long or passive. • Harder to build personal rapport.
Fellowships: Pairing grantees with experienced mentors or coaches for one-on-one or small-group guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly personalized learning. • Builds long-term relationships and accountability. • Supports real-world problem-solving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource-intensive to manage and match effectively. • Quality depends on mentor commitment and compatibility.
Advocacy groups & learning hubs: Regular group discussions or learning circles among grantees to share experiences, challenges, and lessons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes local ownership and collaboration. • Encourages experiential, context-based learning. • Builds community and solidarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need facilitation to stay productive. • Risk of misinformation or dominance by stronger personalities. • Slower learning curve for technical topics.

Training Type	Pros	Cons
Experiential Learning/internships): Hands-on training through site visits, practical demonstrations, or project simulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly engaging and memorable. • Builds practical skills relevant to local contexts. • Strengthens understanding through direct application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistically complex and sometimes expensive. • Difficult to replicate across regions. • Weather or safety may limit feasibility.

Site visits and analysis of first six months' narrative reports

In June and July, the RWVL team conducted site visits across the nine provinces with grantee organisations. The purpose of the visits was to check-in with grantees and to provide targeted on the job training and capacity building as well as provide report writing tips before grantees submitted their first six months' narrative reports. Although early in the process, the RWVL team builds on previous experience of grantee reports. The team identified the following key concerns that grantees struggle with:

Key concern	Description	Strategy
Finance Documentation	Missing or invalid receipts; unsigned invoices	Verification before upload; finance compliance support
Procurement Processes	Incomplete authorisations; missing receipts; budget overruns	On-site retraining and continuous online capacity building
Cash Book Management	Records not updated for long periods	On-site assistance to update and maintain records
Staff	Loss of trained finance staff	Turnover Induction and refresher training for new staff
Non-Finance Staff Handling Finance	Programme staff managing finance tasks without training	Short-term intensive training and mentorship
Budget Adjustments	Requests for reallocation of funds	Guidance on proper procedures and compliance
Governance	Issues identified during due diligence	Post-support visits confirmed improvements
Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)	Missing sex-disaggregated data; incomplete uploads; poor documentation	Hands-on training for proper documentation and system uploads
Communications for Social Change	Weak visibility and online presence	Capacity building to enhance social media and websites

Following these visits, several grantees have demonstrated significant improvement in their MEL, compliance and communications for social change. However, a few continue to require ongoing mentorship and consistent bi-weekly follow-up. Continued technical support, capacity building, and peer learning will enable grantees to strengthen internal systems, maximise programme outcomes.

Pillar 2: Programming and Advocacy

Intermediate Outcome 1200: Strengthened programming and advocacy of women's rights organizations, LBTQI+ groups and women human rights defenders to advance gender equality and empower women and girls.

Grantees made significant progress during the reporting period, in strengthening their programming, advocacy and organizational capacity to advance gender equality and women's empowerment across diverse contexts. Grantees working with LBTQI+ groups and Women Human Rights Defenders reported that they have been able to strengthen their advocacy and feminist leadership efforts at community, provincial, and national levels, amplifying women's and LBTQI+ voices in policy spaces and public discourse.

Immediate Outcome 1210: Increased delivery by WRO and LBTQI+ groups of transformative intersectional programming and advocacy.

Women's rights organisations, LBTQI+ groups, and women human rights defenders are central to driving progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Positioned at the frontline of social change, they challenge systemic discrimination, advocate for inclusive laws and policies, and deliver critical support to marginalised communities. The grantees deep community roots and lived experience equip them to respond to local realities while shaping broader social and legal transformation. Investing in and strengthening their programming and advocacy capacities amplifies their collective impact, ensuring that efforts to advance gender justice remain inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable, and deliberately centred on structurally excluded groups such as LBTQI+ persons, women and girls with disabilities, Indigenous communities, sex workers, migrants, and rural populations.

LBTQI+ and Women Human Rights Defenders: Advocacy: Grantees have been instrumental in advocacy initiatives influencing legislative discussions and public awareness campaigns, ensuring greater visibility of gender and sexual diversity issues. Feminist leadership was strengthened through political education, intergenerational learning, and the creation of safe spaces for reflection, healing, and collective action. Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and young feminist leaders built confidence and advocacy skills, leading community mobilisation efforts and influencing policy engagement processes. Survivor- and community-led approaches ensured that those most affected are not only consulted, but positioned as leaders, board members, peer educators, and co-facilitators.



*Training kit used by the Triangle project for training participants in gender diversity and inclusion.
Picture: The Triangle Project, Western Cape*

Service provision: LBTQI+ Organisations provided essential psychosocial and legal support to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), integrating trauma-informed approaches with advocacy for systemic reform. Grantees provided survivors with access to counselling services, safe shelter referrals, and empowerment programs designed to promote economic independence and resilience. Mobile outreach initiatives and community dialogues ensured that services reached rural and marginalised populations, particularly women and LBTQI+ individuals.

Expanding Inclusion and Intersectional Approaches: A strong focus on inclusion ensured that advocacy and programming addressed intersecting forms of discrimination affecting women, LBTQI+ persons, and other marginalised groups. Triangle project led initiatives on legal recognition, gender marker changes, and social inclusion. The organisation also collaborated with the departments of education and justice which advanced dialogue on implementing national SOGIESC guidelines and addressing institutional bias. Other partners focused on disability-inclusive GBV programming, Indigenous women's rights, and sex worker-led organising, helping ensure that gender justice work does not reproduce exclusions within feminist and GBV spaces. Importantly, several organisations acknowledged existing gaps (e.g. limited reach to some Indigenous or sex worker communities) and are actively building new partnerships and capacities to address these.

Strengthening Movements and Networks: LBTQI+ Grantees contributed to a growing ecosystem of feminist collaboration, solidarity, and collective care. Partnerships were formed across civil society, government departments, and community networks to advance shared goals in GBV prevention, SRHR advocacy, and LBTQI+ inclusion.

Challenges however continue to persist especially for grantees such as limited staffing, funding constraints, and structural barriers. Grantees report that the next phase of the project will focus on deepening advocacy, scaling successful models of feminist and queer organising, and strengthening organisational resilience.

Continued emphasis will be placed on:

- Expanding policy advocacy for gender justice and inclusion.
- Strengthening financial and governance systems for sustainability.
- Enhancing cross-learning and coalition building across movements.
- Investing in young feminist and LBTQI+ leadership to ensure continuity and innovation.

The **Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) (Gauteng)** hosted an "LBQ Women's Accountability Symposium," specifically addressing the gaps in service delivery and policy for LBQ women. Similarly, the youth-focused project on tech-facilitated GBV by **Gender Rights in Tech (GRIT) Western Cape** (intentionally focuses on "girls, LGBTQIA+ youth, and other structurally excluded groups," recognizing their unique vulnerabilities online.

The National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) (Gauteng) Women Arise (EWA) project delivered a Disability-Inclusive GBV Programming (DIP-GBV) workshop to six major gender rights organizations. This transformative approach pushes mainstream feminist organizations to examine and dismantle their own practices. The result is tangible change, such as the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) committing to translate materials into Braille and South African Sign Language.



LMHS held a series of disability inclusion meetings. Photo: Limpopo Mental Health

The advocacy is consistently grounded in the lived realities of the communities served. **Limpopo Mental Health Society (LMHS) (Limpopo)** designed dialogues where "persons with disabilities played central roles not just as beneficiaries, but as active contributors." This ensures that advocacy positions are credible and urgent. The youth project also emphasizes building "a powerful pipeline of community-generated data" on tech-facilitated GBV, which is often absent from official datasets.

Immediate Outcome 1220: Increased ability of emerging local WROs and LGBTIQ+ groups and WHRD to respond to crises and opportunities.

Programme Implementation and Community Impact

Grantees are generally implementing programmes that align closely with project goals. Masimanyane Women’s Rights International (Eastern Cape), Nyara Youth Development (Eastern Cape), SASOPSBIZ Foundation (Kwa Zulu-Natal), and MT Foundation (Free-State) deliver interventions that respond effectively to GBV, gender equality, and community needs.

Youth and community engagement is a central feature for grantees such as New Heritage Foundation (Western Cape), Callas Foundation (Western Cape), Incema and Taboobreakers Association (Western Cape). Initiatives targeting adolescents, young women, men, and boys, such as those implemented by Nyara Youth Development, Bethlehem Child and Family Welfare (Free-State), and Coastal Resource Centre (Eastern Cape), reflect inclusive approaches to GBV prevention and empowerment.

Several organisations integrate skills development and economic empowerment into programming. Curious Future Movement (Free-State), SASOPSBIZ Foundation, and Rainbow Circle (Kwa Zulu-Natal) demonstrated vocational and entrepreneurship initiatives, including sewing and bag-making projects, providing beneficiaries with practical skills and pathways to financial independence.

Advocacy and movement-building efforts are evident among organisations such as One in Nine (Gauteng), Agenda Feminist Media (Kwa Zulu-Natal), Sisonke National Movement (Gauteng), and We Will Speak Out South Africa (Kwa Zulu-Natal). These grantees are implementing digital campaigns, webinars, forums, and policy advocacy to advance gender equality and GBV prevention.



Survivors from the SWITs skills development programme put their building skills to action by building a house for a fire survivor.

Photo: Sasopsbiz Foundation

Restoring Hope Through Skills and Solidarity

In a remarkable demonstration of empowerment and community healing, the Sasopsbiz Foundation based in Kwa Zulu-Natal, through its *Sasops Women in Trade (SWITS)* program, trained youth, primarily young women, in bricklaying as part of its skills development and women empowerment initiative supported by the Renewed Women’s Voice and leadership program.

The program’s practical component took place in Cinderella Park, where trainees rebuilt part of a home that had been tragically destroyed by fire. The incident had claimed the life of a five-year-old child, leaving the family devastated and without shelter. This deeply emotional context gave the training a profound purpose: not only to build skills, but to rebuild lives.

On 28 July 2025, the newly restored house was officially handed over to the bereaved family. The handover ceremony was a moving event, attended by members of the local community, civil society organisations, and government departments including Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Education, uMshunduzi Local Municipality and Gender Links. The strong turnout reflected the collective spirit of support and solidarity.

This initiative did more than teach bricklaying, it restored hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging to a family in mourning. It also showcased the power of women-led development and the importance of equipping youth with practical skills that can transform lives and communities. The Sasops Women in Trade program stands as a beacon of what is possible when empowerment meets compassion, and when training is rooted in real-world impact.

Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) Fellowship – South Africa Cohort (2025–2026)

Following an extensive consultation process with GAC and in an effort to expand the RWVL programme and to leverage on the existing WOSSO portfolio, RWVL launched a targeted initiative to strengthen young women’s leadership and advocacy through piloting the [RWVL-WOSSO Fellowship](#) programme. From October 2025 to December 2026, five young South African women between the ages of 18 and 35 will participate in the Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) Fellowship.

The fellowship aims to enhance advocacy, leadership, and feminist networking skills among emerging leaders in South Africa, while fostering linkages between local action and regional and global policy spaces. This closed call was open exclusively to young women affiliated with organisations currently funded under WVL–South Africa.

The fellowship Benefits will receive: Tailored training and mentorship to strengthen feminist leadership and advocacy capacity. Support to design and implement an advocacy plan aligned with WVL–SA priorities. Opportunities to participate in national, regional, and global advocacy platforms hosted in South Africa, including: Women20 (W20) in October 2025, Civil Society 20 (C20) in November 2025 and the Southern Africa Civil Society Forum alongside the SADC Heads of State Summit in August 2026. The fellows are:



Boitumelo Tefo

Advocacy areas: Justice and GBV prevention, LGBTQ rights and inclusion, storytelling and narrative advocacy and intergenerational and community.

“My advocacy is grounded in the conviction that healing and justice are inseparable. As a feminist activist and storyteller, I work to build spaces where individuals and communities can confront gender-based violence, reclaim their agency, and reimagine more equitable futures. I view storytelling not only as a strategic tool for social

transformation, one that enables true telling, strengthens solidarity, and drives collective healing. My work focuses on gender justice, with an emphasis on community-led solutions that are inclusive, reflective, and sustainable. I am deeply committed to amplifying voices that are often marginalised, and to ensuring that advocacy remains rooted in empathy, accountability, and collaboration.”

Carren Liando

Advocacy areas: SRHR, Digital storytelling

“I am passionate about using communication and digital platforms to raise awareness, amplify voices, and drive positive change. My work focuses on empowering women and young people through storytelling, online advocacy, and community engagement. I believe technology can be a powerful tool for social impact and equality.”





Kwenzokuhle S. Khoza

Advocacy areas: Harnessing technology, media, and community engagement to create meaningful social impact, empowering marginalized communities through visual storytelling, content creation, and strategic communication.

“I believe that unlocking your mind is the key to becoming unstoppable. Black child, it is possible. Do it scared. Do it broke. Do it unsure. Some people believe in you, who see your potential, and who will walk with you as you rise. My work and advocacy are about creating the space, support, and knowledge to help minds open, dreams expand, and limits disappear.”

Mthembukazi “Kazi” Bavuma

Advocacy areas: Gender equality, climate, resilience, social justice, amplifying the voices of women, youth, LGBTQIA+ people, and marginalised communities within environmental and governance spaces.

“I believe storytelling is activism. Through my work, I aim to create spaces where truth, justice, and healing intersect – where communities can unlearn, relearn, and reimagine systems that truly serve people and the planet. My advocacy is rooted in empathy, equity and courage, guided by the belief that inclusive transformation begins when we listen deeply and collaborate.”



Pillar 3: Movement Strengthening.

Intermediate Outcome 1300 Increased effectiveness of sub-national, national, regional and global women’s rights platforms, networks and alliances to affect policy, legal and social change.

The grantees engaged in a rich and multi-faceted ecosystem of movement building. Their approaches are strategic, layered, and designed to create sustainable, long-term change by empowering individuals, strengthening organizations, and forging powerful alliances. The table below lists all the policy work done by grantees in the first six months of implementation.

Table 8: Policies grantees are working on and their progress

Organisation	Name of Law/ Policy/Framework/Strategy	Thematic focus	Level of policy	Advocacy intent?	Progress
Callas Foundation	Frameworks - Survivor-Centred, Trauma-Informed Response Model	Psychosocial healing, court accompaniment, and safe referrals	Local	Adopt	Successful
Callas Foundation	Strategies - Men's Engagement	Engaging men in GBV prevention and norm change	Local	Adopt	Successful
Sizolwethu Child and Youth Care	Protection from Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment Policy	GBV prevention, workplace safety, LGBTQ+ protection	Organizational and Community Outreach	Improve	Successful
Callas Foundation	Policy Survivor-centred GBV response and care standards	Survivor-centred GBV response and care standards	local (organisational)	Adopt	Successful
uThando Restoration Centre	Multi-sectoral War Room Policy Agenda	Inclusion of women's voices and survivor leadership	Local (Ward/District)	Improve	Partially successful
uThando Restoration Centre	GBVF Council Act (Act No. 9 of 2024)	Governance and accountability in GBVF response	National	Block	In progress
uThando Restoration Centre	Ward-based Rapid Response Team Framework	Community-based GBVF coordination	Local (Ward level)	Adopt/Improve	In progress
Callas Foundation	Policy - Obstetric Violence Legal Awareness (Workshops)	Reproductive rights and health justice	National	Improve	In progress
Callas Foundation	Laws - Sexual Offences Act	Sexual offence definitions, mandatory reporting, survivor protection	National	Improve	In progress
Callas Foundation	Laws - Domestic Violence Act	Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998	National	Improve (via training and awareness)	In progress
Moswen NGO	Reproductive rights	Reproductive autonomy and access to health care.	Local	To improve	In progress
Moswen NGO	Health care access	Quality health care services	Local	To improve	In progress
Moswen NGO	Gender based violence laws	Justice safety and protection.	Local	To improve	In progress
MT Foundation	Safeguarding policy (internal)	Protection of Children, Women & Vulnerable Groups	Organisational/Local	Adopt & Implement	In Progress
MT Foundation	Local Government White Paper Review – GBV	Local government service delivery	Local, Provincial & National	Improve	In Progress
MT Foundation	Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) Consultation on the NDC 2030–2035	Climate change, food security, gender justice	National	Improve	In Progress

access—align with global agendas, including the G20 Summit. This alignment ensures Southern African advocacy contributes meaningfully to global solutions, positioning women’s rights organisations as key actors in international feminist and policy spaces.

Each advocacy group worked on defining their policy advocacy direction, deciding:

- What to advocate for
- How to position their campaigns within existing frameworks (e.g., the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, climate change policy)
- Where to intervene — community, provincial, or national levels
- With whom to collaborate — from state actors to fellow CSOs

Building a Movement Through Collaboration and Inclusion

The Diversity and Inclusion Advocacy Group on WhatsApp has emerged as a powerful example of what is possible when passion, purpose, and partnership converge. Despite being geographically dispersed across South Africa and the broader SADC region, this dynamic group has cultivated strong working relationships and built a vibrant network of advocates committed to advancing inclusion and human rights.

Through seamless coordination—ranging from communications and program planning to concept development and resource sharing—the group has demonstrated the power of collaborative advocacy. Members have identified their unique strengths and strategically distributed tasks, ensuring that every contribution adds value. From designing posters and coordinating sittings to sharing notes and producing impactful content, their synergy has been nothing short of inspiring.

One of the group’s standout achievements was the series of well-organised podcast programs during Pride Month, which amplified voices from the LGBTQIA+ community and highlighted intersectional issues. These sessions were not only informative but also deeply engaging, reflecting the group’s commitment to inclusive storytelling and accessible advocacy.

Their support for one another has extended beyond digital collaboration. Members have consistently attended each other’s programs, strengthening solidarity and visibility across regions. A prime example of their success was a recent webinar titled “Justice Delayed is Justice Denied for Persons with Disabilities,” which drew around 90 attendees. The session was expertly coordinated, with well-prepared speakers and rich content that addressed systemic barriers in the justice system for women and persons with disabilities. The discussion emphasized accessibility, representation, and the urgent need for policy reform.

This group’s work exemplifies the power of networking and movement building. Their continued connection with other advocates—both within South Africa and across borders has created a ripple effect of awareness, action, and empowerment. They are not just running programs; they are building a movement rooted in inclusion, solidarity, and justice.

The grantees networks resulted in several lessons learned:



Grantees chose their networking partners in March 2025. Photo: Mboy Maswabi

- Decentralised ownership fosters resilience , grantees who led campaigns used minimal financial input but generated maximum impact through collaboration and shared leadership.
- Theme-based networking aligned networks with thematic hubs and advocacy goals enables both depth and focus.
- There is space to deepen formalised mentorship structure, especially intergenerational and across different RWVL cohorts (e.g. Fellows, interns and grantee organizations), will build sustainability.

During the current reporting period, RWVL grantees have initiated several policy advocacy processes, many of which are in the early stages but show strong momentum, significant movement-building and pre-policy engagement activities have taken place. The biggest being the *Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied – GBV Reform Panel*

Time line of GBV Reform Panel

1. Initiative Launch: The campaign was launched in March 2025 as a direct, strategic response to systemic delays and gaps in the justice system for GBV survivors, identified during a prior summit.
2. Expert Panel Formation: Between March and April 2025, a multidisciplinary expert panel was established, comprising survivors, civil society experts, legal scholars, researchers, and activists to lead the effort.
3. Initial Scoping: The panel's first briefing meeting was held on 30 April 202 to scope key policy bottlenecks within GBV-related legal frameworks and survivor support services.
4. Key Milestone: Inaugural panel sitting is scheduled for 28 May 2025, marking the first major step of the public campaign.
5. Strategic Objective: The primary outcome of the panel is to influence South African national policy reforms, specifically advocating for survivor-centred judicial procedures and enhanced court support services.
6. Deliverable: The panel produced a formal, influential document to be submitted to the Office of the President of the Republic of South Africa to be delivered on 25 November during the launch of the 16 Days of No Violence Against Women and Children.

Webinars and Joint Campaigns

In August 2025, RWVL grantees launched a Women’s Month social media campaign under the theme *"Our Youth, Our Future – Pushing Forward with Resilience and Skill."* The campaign highlighted the impact of RWVL grants on grassroots empowerment, showcasing stories of healing, advocacy, and skills development. It boosted visibility for partner organisations and demonstrated RWVL’s commitment to accountability and public engagement. Using hashtags like #RWVLSA and #OurYouthOurFuture, the campaign gained strong traction across Facebook, Instagram, and X, increasing online traffic and community recognition.

This followed a joint advocacy effort on the International Day Against Trafficking in Persons (6 August), which coincided with a national alert on youth trafficking. RWVL partners mobilised rapidly, reinforcing the strength of movement-building and collaboration in protecting vulnerable communities.

NYARA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Connecting the Unconnected

Please Join Us
WORKING SMART, REACHING FAR!

Webinar

Theme: Harnessing Social Media & AI Tools
for Greater Impact

FRIDAY 29
AUGUST, 2025 10.00 AM - 11.30 AM

MEETING ID: 854 1945 2723

Zoom link : <https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/85419452723>

GENDER LINKS FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

in partnership with Canada

Blogs

In September 2025, RWVL published four blogs to elevate feminist knowledge and grantee experiences. These articles, posted on Gender Links and WVL-SA platforms, serve as advocacy tools for community dialogues, training, and social media campaigns. They also set the stage for 16 Days of Activism 2025, documenting experiences in justice reform, inclusion, digital innovation, and rural activism.

Grantees continue to build collective power through formal networks, such as disability-responsive GBV alliances, and large grassroots coalitions. They bridge local realities with policy spaces, shifting from abstract frameworks to actionable advocacy. By holding duty-bearers accountable and mentoring future leaders, grantees are creating a sustainable ecosystem for gender justice.

6.PROJECT IMPACT STORIES

Project Impact Story: “After 40 Years, I Found My Voice” A Survivor’s Journey through the Access to Justice and Court Support Programme- Callas Foundation

For nearly forty years, she lived with a secret that stole her childhood and shadowed her life. As a young girl, she had been sexually assaulted by her uncle, someone her family trusted. The trauma buried itself deep, and silence became her way of surviving.

“I tried to forget,” she recalls softly. “But you never really forget something like that. You just learn how to live around it.”

For decades, fear, shame, and the fear of not being believed kept her from speaking out. She watched her life unfold with the quiet weight of the past pressing on her shoulders. Her uncle went on with his life. Respected, unchallenged, and free. Then, in 2023, everything changed. She discovered that the man who had hurt her was working as a school transport driver. The thought of him around children every day filled her with dread. “That was the moment I knew I couldn’t stay silent anymore,” she said. “If I didn’t speak up, another child could be next.”

It was a turning point, the moment when silence met courage. Unsure of where to start, she reached out to the Callas Foundation’s Access to Justice and Court Support Programme. For the first time in her life, she was met with compassion, belief, and guidance. The team provided psychosocial counselling, legal accompaniment, and emotional support, walking beside her every step of the way.

With their help, she found the strength to file her case. The legal process was long and difficult, but she was not alone. “They held my hand through it all,” she said. “Even when I wanted to give up, they reminded me why my voice mattered.” As the case moved forward, another family member, who had been just five years old when she too was abused by the same perpetrator came forward. Her disclosure confirmed what the survivor had always known in her heart: this was not an isolated act, but a pattern of abuse that had gone unchecked for decades.



The Callas Foundation team offer court support services for survivors that they work with. Photo: Lynette Dixon

With strong legal representation and unwavering emotional support, both survivors stood firm. And at last, justice was served. The perpetrator was convicted and sentenced, ending years of impunity. When the verdict was read, tears filled her eyes, not just of pain, but of relief. "After forty years," she said, "I finally felt seen. I finally felt free." The case did more than deliver justice. It rippled through the community, breaking the silence that had protected abusers for too long. Neighbours began to talk openly about sexual violence. Others came forward with their own stories. Local leaders began to see the importance of survivor-centred justice.

Through her courage, and with the support of the Callas Foundation an entire community began to heal. Today, she stands as a symbol of strength and hope. "It took me most of my life to speak out," she says, "but if my story can help even one person find their voice sooner, then it was worth it." Her journey reminds us that justice is not only about punishment, it's about restoring dignity, trust, and hope.

Project Impact Story: From Silence to Strength: Lizel's Journey of Empowerment through the Mbokodo Program- *Justice Desk*



Lizel not her real name, a strong advocate of the Mbokodo project.

In the heart of Bonteheuwel in the Western Cape, a South African community often defined by violence and struggle, a young woman named Lizel dared to believe that her story could be different. Growing up surrounded by hardship, opportunities felt few and far between, and voices like hers were often drowned out by the noise of survival.

"I used to think my voice didn't matter," Lizel admits. "I thought people like me were just meant to stay quiet."

Her turning point came when she joined the Mbokodo Program, a safe, nurturing space designed to empower young women facing adversity. Through emotional support, creative workshops, and leadership training, Lizel found not only her confidence but her voice.

Within the program, she learned to express herself, develop leadership skills, and build resilience. She began to speak up, first for herself, and then for others. "The program didn't just change how I see the world," she says. "It changed how I see myself. I'm no longer just surviving; I'm growing, leading, and showing others that they can too."

As Lizel grew, her transformation began to ripple outward. She became a role model for her peers, encouraging other young women to believe in their worth and potential. Teachers noticed her growing confidence at school. Younger girls began turning to her for guidance and support.

Through her involvement in the Mbokodo Program, Lizel became proof that empowerment creates change far beyond the individual. She gained leadership skills, academic focus, and the courage to use her voice and, in doing so, she helped foster a more hopeful and resilient community in Bonteheuwel.

"Before the Mbokodo Program, I didn't believe my voice mattered," she says. "Now, I know I have the power to lead, to speak up, and to help others find their strength too."

Today, Lizel stands as a young leader, confident, compassionate, and determined to create the kind of change she once dreamed of. Her story reminds us that when young women are given support, safety, and opportunity, they don't just rise, they lift their communities with them.

7. LEARNING

The reporting period has yielded a rich tapestry of lessons that affirm, challenge, and deepen the project's theory of change. Grantees consistently highlighted the transformative impact of a trust-based, flexible, and feminist funding model, while also providing critical insights for enhancing future implementation. Reflecting on the assumptions underpinning the project Theory of Change: The theory of change assumed that providing funding to feminist and grassroots organizations would enable community-led impact. The lessons learned strongly affirm this, while also revealing nuances:

Trust-based funding unlocks potential	Grantees repeatedly confirmed that <i>flexible</i> funding, free from rigid pre-determined outputs, allowed them to respond to real-time needs, adapt to community contexts, and focus on meaningful, deep work. This approach was cited as crucial for building both organizational capability and confidence.	
A key lesson was that healing, empowerment, and leadership development do not follow linear project timelines. Grantees working in psychosocial and trauma-informed spaces learned that "meaningful transformation does not always align with predetermined timelines." Change is often non-linear, organic, and dependent on participants' emotional readiness.	Linear timelines for transformation	
The role of survivors	The assumption that survivors are central to change was powerfully validated, but in a more profound way than anticipated. Grantees learned that when survivors are "trusted, trained, and supported with patience and dignity," they do not just heal they become powerful leaders and agents of change within their communities.	

Beyond the planned objectives, several positive unintended outcomes emerged:

Rapid leadership development:	Innovation through co-creation:	Strengthened intergenerational engagement:
Organizations did not fully anticipate the speed at which quiet, withdrawn participants would rise to become confident, active voices in community dialogues.	The flexible model allowed for organic innovation. For example, a suggestion from a beneficiary (` Shibe `) to teach more than one kind of bag led to the profound lesson of "Nothing for us without Us," reinforcing the need to co-design interventions with communities from the outset.	The value of bridging feminist knowledge and lived experience across different age groups emerged as a valuable, unanticipated step in strengthening movement-building.

Operational lessons carried significant implications for grantees and the funding partner. **Timely disbursement of funds** emerged as critical, as delays compressed implementation timelines and caused unnecessary stress. **Reporting requirements** posed a major

administrative burden, with small organisations dedicating entire teams for weeks without dedicated resources. Grantees also highlighted the **need for adaptive monitoring and evaluation** tools that capture qualitative dimensions such as voice, agency, and healing, beyond standard quantitative frameworks. While digital tools expanded reach, digital exclusion persisted, underscoring the importance of pairing online strategies with offline engagement. Finally, the **non-negotiable role of care** was emphasised, as trauma-informed work demands resources for wellness, debriefing, and team support to prevent burnout among staff and frontline workers.

These are the lessons summarized for RWVL:

- Enhancing funding flexibility:**

 - Future programming will continue to prioritise long-term, adaptive funding that accounts for administrative costs, staff wellbeing, and incidentals. This approach acknowledges the holistic needs of feminist organisations and enables more resilient operations.
- Strengthening learning ecosystems:**

 - RWVL will invest in structured mechanisms for peer learning, cross-partner collaboration, and mentorship to reduce organisational isolation and encourage innovation across the network.
- Streamlining Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):**

 - Simplified reporting processes and continued training will support grantees in capturing both quantitative and qualitative progress. Building grantees’ M&E capacity remains a central pillar for tracking transformative, non-linear outcomes.
- Ensuring timely disbursements:**

 - Improved communication and predictability in funding timelines will support effective planning and implementation at the organisational level.

Lessons for Grantees and Implementation:

- Deepening Community-Led Design:**

 - Future interventions will be more intentionally co-created with communities and survivors to ensure local ownership, contextual relevance, and sustainability.
- Embedding Care and Wellness:**

 - Organisations will integrate trauma-informed approaches and staff care strategies, recognising wellbeing as essential to sustained feminist leadership and impact.
- Balancing Digital and Offline Approaches:**

 - Implementation will increasingly blend digital advocacy with in-person engagement to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all communities.
- Integrating Advocacy from the Outset:**

 - Future programming will embed advocacy and policy objectives into design phases, ensuring that community-based interventions contribute to systemic change.

8. FEEDBACK AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Grantees under the Renewed Women’s Voice and Leadership (RWVL) programme shared valuable recommendations to inform future design, delivery, and sustainability of feminist funding initiatives. These insights underscore the importance of flexibility, care, and collaboration in achieving lasting impact.

Area	Grantee feedback	GL response
Programmatic design and implementation	Grantees emphasised the need for integrated, holistic programming that brings together economic empowerment, psychosocial support, legal aid, and political education.	<i>GL does not prescribe to the grantees the types of programmes that they apply for, grantees are encouraged to integrate holistic programme as per budget permits.</i>
	They recommended formalising RWVL's flexible funding model by introducing specific budget lines for incidentals and urgent community responses. There was also strong advocacy for long-term funding cycles, allowing organisations to sustain deep, transformative engagement over time.	<i>GL recognises that for projects to show impact and real tangible growth a longer term investment is needed.</i>
Capacity building and organisational sustainability	To strengthen institutional resilience, grantees highlighted the need for enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) support, including practical toolkits, targeted training, and dedicated M&E budget allocations.	<i>The current budgeting template has a provision for M&E. Training on M&E is ongoing at GL with a dedicated team of three staff who can provide capacity. GL Academy is a direct result of observing grantee capacity needs.</i>
	They recommended access to pro-bono expertise for smaller organisations. Recognising the emotional labour involved in gender justice work, grantees also called for dedicated funding for staff wellbeing, including psychological support, team-building, and wellness initiatives.	<i>As part of ensuring that grantees take part in wellness one of the courses of GLA is on wellbeing and self-care. Grantees are encouraged to sign up for the wellness course.</i>
	Other priorities included increased support for administrative and human resource costs.	
Partnership and Movement Building	Grantees reaffirmed the importance of peer learning and collaboration as drivers of collective strength. They recommended the creation of more structured exchange platforms such as learning hubs, thematic working groups, and peer-mentoring programmes.	<i>GL has implemented the fellowship programme as well as the internship programme.</i>
	Recognising the relational nature of movement work, grantees also suggested that future grants explicitly fund partnership development, ensuring time and resources are available to build trust and clarity among collaborators.	<i>RWVL grants are not prescriptive by nature, grantees are encouraged to submit proposals in their desired scope of work. For the MYC grantees Movement Building has been included as one of the core pillars of the work.</i>

Area	Grantee feedback	GL response
Funding and donor practices	Grantees urged funders to maintain clear and timely fund disbursement schedules to improve planning and delivery.	<i>GL acknowledges the delayed in the first tranche disbursements and the team encourages grantees to ensure that their finance documents, MEL and narrative reports are of an acceptable standard to minimise the back and forth between grantees and the RWVL team.</i>
	They appreciated RWVL's efforts to simplify reporting and encouraged further innovation, such as user-friendly templates and the inclusion of qualitative impact measures like stories of change.	<i>GL is continuously looking at ways of ensuring that reporting is not an onerous task. GL has standardised their stories of change template across all programmes in an effort to make the stories easier to capture.</i>
Communications and Advocacy	Grantees identified a strong need for communications capacity-building, including mentorship in storytelling, media relations, and strategic documentation to enhance public engagement and attract additional funding.	<i>The first course offering of GL academy was in MEL and communications for Social change this included social media, blogs, photo-essays and change stories.</i>

9. ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Output and Activity reporting worksheet (Excel Template provided as guidance)
- Annex 2: Outcome worksheet
- Annex:3 Common Output Indicator Report (including the List of Partners) (Excel Template provided as guidance)
- Annex 4: Communications: Two examples of communication products and/or events you are most proud of from the reporting period (include links to publicly available information)
- Annex 5: Annual work plan for next period
- Annex 6: PSC agenda and minutes
- Annex 7: ODS Report
- Annex 8: RWVL Progress report
- Annex 9: Advocacy themes table