Newsletter

QUARTER 1 / ISSUE 04
2025

GBVF RESPONSE FUND

1 Message from our Interim CEO

2 Introducing a Team Member

3 Advocacy News

4 Campaign News

5 Q&A with Funding Partners

6 Our Community-Based Organisations

7 Thought Leadership

8 In The News

9 Hotline Numbers & Links

Welcome

Welcome to the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Response Fund's Newsletter. Together, let's stay informed, engaged, and committed to creating a world free from violence and inequality.

1



Message from the Interim CEO

Zanele Ngwepe
Interim CEO, GBVF ResponseFund1

Dear Stakeholder,

Reflecting on the past five months since stepping into the interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) role on December 1 last year, I feel immense gratitude. Although the role initially felt daunting, I quickly discovered that leading with clarity, empathy, and kindness has brought out my best work, values I hope will define my legacy.

While our sector grapples with the U.S. Government's decision to permanently cut USAID/PEPFAR funding, we draw inspiration from our team's ongoing global engagement and recognition. Just recently, our Programmes Manager, Tirhani Manganyi, returned from the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

This year's CSW69 reviewed progress on the Beijing Declaration, a visionary plan adopted in 1995 by 189 governments to secure equal rights for all women and girls. I encourage you to read Tirhani's reflections in the Advocacy News section of this newsletter, where she shares insights from global peers confronting similar challenges and pioneering GBVF innovations and research.

Despite continued efforts to advance gender equality around the globe, the World Economic Forum (WEF) cautions that we remain 134 years away from achieving full gender parity, projecting this milestone to 2158. CSW69 delegates agreed that the journey toward gender equality stands at a critical crossroads, expressing deep concern that globally, we are woefully lagging in our efforts.

That's why we were thrilled when Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah was sworn in as Namibia's first female President on March 21, Human Rights Day. She joins the ranks of other African nations led by women, including Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mauritius, and Malawi.

> **"LEADING WITH CLARITY, EMPATHY, AND KINDNESS HAS BROUGHT OUT MY BEST WORK"**

Closer to home, in February we were honoured to host Honourable Harriette Chiggai, Advisor on Women's Rights to Kenyan President William Ruto. Her visit, part of a broader fact-finding mission, marked a meaningful moment of cross-country learning about establishing a private sector-led GBVF Fund, and tackling change resistance, tradition, and gender data challenges.

More good news is that our Board has approved an extension of our existence beyond December 2027, reaffirming trust in our work and the impact we continue to make. Through strong partnerships, we continue to deliver evidence-based, impactful interventions that move us closer to our vision: ending GBVF in South Africa.

As we enter a new five-year funding cycle, the financial gap we face is growing wider and more urgent. Shifting donor priorities and the declining development funding has put our Fund's progress at risk, and support from our partners is now more critical than ever.

One of our key priorities is strengthening support for Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in under-resourced hotspot areas, as they play a proven and vital role in community-led responses to GBVF. Sadly, global funding cuts have placed immense financial strain on CBOs, limiting their ability to assist survivors.

These funding cuts have also impacted two of our flagship legacy projects: our GBV in Schools Project (to address violence against children in schools) and the Shelters Project (to support capacity building and service standardisation in shelters). Both projects are high-impact legacy initiatives with potential for scale.



Zanele on stage at the HIV Intersectionality Engagement

To sustain these initiatives and bring these two legacy projects to life, our Board established an emergency fund. While initial resources have been allocated, additional support is needed to avoid service disruptions. We are actively engaging corporations, global development agencies, and the philanthropic sector to bridge this funding gap.

Looking back on the first quarter, we continued to work with the Minerals Council and the National Prosecuting Authority towards strengthening Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), which provide medical, psychosocial and legal support to survivors of GBVF. Two underperforming TCCs in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape are being refurbished and relocated to improve service delivery.

Towards the end of last year, we proudly launched the Private Sector Coalition Against Gender-based Violence and Harassment in the Workplace (PSC), and this initiative is gaining ground. Following the 16 Days of Activism Executive Champions Campaign, the PSC will focus on capacity-building initiatives and technical support to help companies adapt their operations to better prevent and respond to GBVF.

A service provider is currently being identified to support companies in gap assessments and developing tailored improvement plans to drive a culture of transformation and promote a zero-tolerance approach to GBVH in the workplace. Implementation will begin in early June, alongside the participation of the second cohort of executives in the next phase of the advocacy campaign.

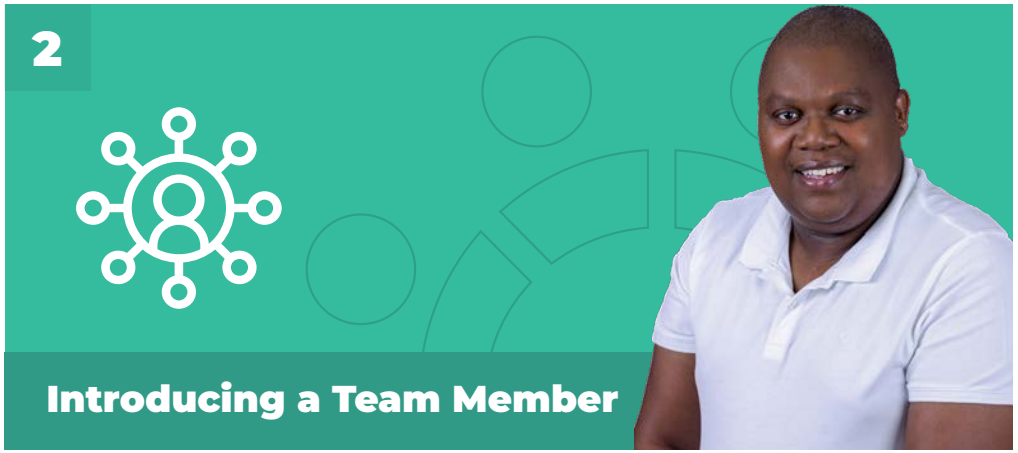
To mark International Women's Month and National Human Rights Month, we joined four days of vibrant activities at the 2025 Human Rights Festival held at Constitution Hill. Our participation included information dissemination through an exhibition stall and partaking in a solidarity march to raise awareness about human rights and gender-based violence.

A key highlight was a high-level dialogue, co-hosted with global beauty brand Avon. The discussion explored ways to improve national funding responses to GBVF within a shifting geopolitical landscape and evolving international funding priorities. It underscored the urgent need for innovative fundraising strategies, nationally coordinated funding systems, and robust accountability measures. Emphasis was placed on a multisectoral approach to addressing GBVF and intersecting crises such as HIV, ensuring long-term impact and meaningful social transformation, especially in the current constrained funding environment.

I leave you with a powerful reminder from the Ford Foundation, one of our valued partners: "Whatever the future holds in the fight against gender-based violence, and whichever leaders join the charge, we will never stop working to make our country safer for all women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people. In their hands, a brighter future for South Africa seems certain."

Let's continue building that future, together.

Yours,
Ms. Zanele Ngwepe
Interim CEO, GBVF Response Fund



Anele Makhobotloane
Financial Accountant

1. What inspired your decision to join the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Response Fund (the Fund), and how has that motivation evolved since you started this part of your journey?

My decision to join the Fund was guided by my professional experience and a deeply personal sense of purpose. With a background in consulting and prior work in the NGO sector, I've seen firsthand the critical role non-profit organisations play in addressing social challenges. The Fund's mission resonated with me immediately; it felt less like a job and more like a calling.

That sense of purpose has only deepened over time. Being closely involved in the work of addressing gender-based violence has revealed just how widespread and deeply rooted the issue is in our country.

What drives me most is the opportunity to work alongside Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)—the dedicated, on-the-ground champions who engage directly with survivors and vulnerable communities. In my role, I support them with financial and reporting matters, helping ensure their operations remain compliant, transparent, and sustainable.

While most of my work happens behind the scenes, I know that strong financial systems help empower these organisations to deliver real impact. Contributing to the broader mission of GBVF prevention and response in this way is both meaningful and deeply fulfilling.



Anele at a 67 Minutes Mandela Day team event

2. Before joining the Fund, what professional experience and roles shaped your career and how do they contribute to your current role?

My career has bridged the non-profit and corporate finance sectors, giving me a unique perspective and a diverse skill set. It began at the Eastern Cape Regional Centre in partnership with Walter Sisulu University, where we trained healthcare professionals on TB and HIV. This formative experience revealed the transformative power of education and community engagement.

I later transitioned into the banking sector, holding roles at FNB, Standard Bank, and Nedbank. From there, I moved into accounting and tax, gaining experience at a private firm and then in a specialised tax environment. These roles expanded my financial expertise and prepared me to handle complex matters involving financial reporting, tax compliance, and advisory support.

Today, as a registered tax practitioner and accountant, I apply this broad experience to support CBOs in managing their finances with confidence and integrity. Whether assisting with financial reports, addressing routine queries, or guiding compliance, my goal is to provide clear, practical support that enables our partners to meet their responsibilities effectively and sustainably.

3. Considering your unique perspective, how do you believe we can enhance greater collaboration to realise the mandate of the Fund?

Enhancing collaboration begins with strengthening the financial capacity of CBOs. While support in Monitoring and Evaluation remains important, equal emphasis must be placed on building financial governance and compliance skills. Many CBOs do not allocate funds for audits, despite audited financial statements being critical for securing ongoing funding and enabling organisational growth.



Anele visiting the Themba Thuthuzela Care Centre

Equipping these organisations with the tools, training, and support to manage their finances effectively, produce accurate reports, and meet compliance obligations lays a solid foundation for sustainability.

This type of capacity-building improves reporting quality and enhances the overall credibility of CBOs, thereby amplifying the long-term impact of the Fund's work. In addition, a sound financial framework empowers CBOs to fulfil their mandates with greater confidence, accountability, and resilience.



Anele with the GBVF team at the 702 Walk The Talk

3



Advocacy Work

The Advocacy and Strategic Partnership Portfolio reached significant milestones which signified continuity and resilient responses to gender-based violence not only at community levels, but also in the workplace.

GBVF and HIV Intersectionality: Multi-stakeholder engagement



Multistakeholder partnership between the Fund, SANAC and Sasol

During Sexual and Reproductive Health Month, the Fund, together with the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), hosted a powerful hybrid multistakeholder dialogue as part of our ongoing intersectionality webinar series.

This session explored the deeply interconnected nature of the gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) and HIV epidemics in South Africa. Expertly moderated by UN Women's Jacqueline Utamuriza-Nzisabira, the event featured insightful contributions from thought leaders and practitioners representing the Human Sciences Research Council, University of Pretoria, NACOSA, Bridging the Gap SA, and the Teddy Bear Clinic, among others.

Through compelling presentations and lived experiences, the webinar shed light on the structural inequalities and cultural norms that drive both crises. It created a meaningful platform for exchange, bringing together researchers, policymakers, community leaders, and frontline service providers to identify systemic gaps and co-develop integrated, survivor-centred solutions.

SANAC CEO Dr. Thembisile Xulu concluded the session with a powerful call to action, emphasising the need for sustained collaboration and multisectoral commitment.

Aligned with the National Strategic Plan on GBVF and the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, the dialogue marked a pivotal step toward dismantling systemic barriers and building inclusive, stigma-free responses rooted in the lived realities of affected communities.

The Fund at CSW69: Showcasing innovation and strengthening partnerships

The 69th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) presented a valuable opportunity for the Fund to deepen engagement with key government stakeholders and reaffirm its role as a strategic partner in South Africa's national response to GBVF.



Tirhani delivering an address at the CSW69 event in New York

High-level meetings focused on strengthening coordination and exploring co-funding opportunities for CBOs, reflecting the growing recognition of the Fund's contribution to sustainable, multisectoral GBVF solutions.

CSW69 also served as a powerful platform for the Fund to share South Africa's pioneering model of sustainable GBVF financing with global audiences. Through participation in three high-impact side events, hosted in collaboration with the Ford Foundation, FCDO/UK, and Ilitha Labantu, the Fund showcased its innovative approach to resource mobilisation and community impact within an African context.

These engagements drew strong interest from international donors and development partners keen to learn from or adapt our model. The Fund's presence not only elevated South Africa's leadership on the global stage but also laid the groundwork for future collaborations that will strengthen the global movement to eliminate GBVF in our generation.

Strengthening the TCC services through strategic site visits



GBVF Fund during a strategic site visit at the Themba Thuthuzela Care Centre

Central to our ongoing commitment to enhance survivor-centred services at the Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), recent strategic site visits will play a pivotal role in supporting the re-accommodation and fortification of centres in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

On 6 March 2025, a delegation conducted a site visit to the Themba TCC in Mpumalanga. The objective was to assess the operational model and gather crucial insights to guide the upcoming re-accommodation plans for the Edendale TCC in KwaZulu-Natal and the Lusikisiki TCC in the Eastern Cape. The Themba TCC, noted for its integrated and survivor-friendly approach, provided valuable insights that are shaping these enhancements.

Subsequently, a second visit took place on 10 April 2025 at the Edendale TCC in KwaZulu-Natal. This visit focused on identifying an appropriate space for the centre, presenting the project plan to the Department of Health team, and finalising implementation details.

These visits are integral to the Fund's broader initiative to bolster the TCC network nationwide, ensuring that survivors of GBV receive the highest quality of care and support in secure, well-equipped environments.



Themba Thuthuzela Care Centre in Mpumalanga

4



Campaign News



Celebrating International Women's Month with a powerful message of RESPECT

To commemorate International Women's Month, the GBVF Response Fund (the Fund) amplified the RESPECT initiative with bold national awareness messaging across billboards in Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal. The billboards featured the powerful message "When Women Rise, Nations Rise," acknowledging the impact of empowering women in society. The campaign's bold messaging and visuals were crafted to challenge harmful social norms while promoting the principles of mutual respect, safety, and equality.



International Women's Month billboard at the Johannesburg CBD taxi rank

SABC Collaboration: Public service announcement to commemorate International Women's Month

Expanding our reach even further, we activated our strategic partnership with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to air multilingual public service announcements across 18 radio stations, including community and national platforms. By ensuring representation in all 11 official languages, the campaign resonated with diverse audiences and reached over 25 million South Africans. This widespread visibility reaffirmed the Fund's commitment to fostering a culture of respect and accountability, starting in homes, communities, and institutions across the country.

Celebrating Human Rights and Social Justice: The Fund's participation in the Human Rights Festival

For the second consecutive year, the Fund proudly participated in the Human Rights Festival held from 20–23 March at Constitution Hill, an event that continues to serve as a powerful platform for activism, reflection, and solidarity within the social justice sector. The Fund's presence included a dynamic panel discussion, an engaging exhibition stand, and active participation in the festival's solidarity march alongside fellow civil society organisations, advocates, and community leaders. These collective efforts embodied our commitment to fostering inclusive spaces where dialogue and advocacy converge to drive systemic change.



Participants at the Fund's exhibition stall during the Human Rights Festival

Our panel discussion brought together influential voices to tackle a pressing issue: how to respond to shifting geopolitical and funding landscapes that directly impact efforts to address social challenges like GBVF and HIV. Panellists explored the implications of shrinking donor pools and rising global priorities, offering insights into how national and local actors can adapt, collaborate, and mobilise domestic resources to safeguard progress. The session underscored the urgency of strengthening institutional resilience and sustaining momentum in GBVF prevention and response, particularly at a time when fiscal uncertainty threatens to stall hard-won gains. Through this participation, the Fund reaffirmed its role as both a thought leader and a connector, committed to advancing a well-resourced, community-driven approach to human rights and gender justice.



The Fund partaking in the We Are The People Walk during the Human Rights Festival



Panel discussion on strengthening national funding mechanisms during the Human Rights Festival



5



Q & A with Funding Partner

Ruchelle Mouton

Head of Group Marketing and Services, Tractor Outdoor

1. What role does your organisation play in reducing gender-based violence and femicide?

At Tractor Outdoor, we recognise the power of media in driving awareness and social change. Through our CSI filler initiative, we provide billboard advertising to GBVF assisting their goal of combating social economic issues in South Africa. By amplifying critical messages across our digital out-of-home (DOOH) network, we ensure that people and communities have access to essential information, helplines, and resources. Our role is to use our platform to bring visibility to the fight against GBVF, challenge societal norms, and encourage action.

2. To drive social change, what decisive action can corporate South Africa take to prevent and monitor GBVF at work?

Companies should educate employees on identifying and addressing GBVF, allocate resources to prevention initiatives , and provide stronger enforcement of protections.

3. Looking ahead, what are your aspirations for your partnership with the Fund, and how do you see your involvement evolving?

We see an opportunity to encourage other media owners to join forces in making meaningful contributions to the fight against GBVF.



Sharing the Fund's message along the highway in Johannesburg

4. What's the one thing that you would change now so we can live in a GBVF-free South Africa?

A GBVF-free South Africa is possible when survivors are truly heard, offenders are held accountable, and communities take collective responsibility to end the cycle of violence.

5. From your perspective, what are some of the obstacles that we still have to overcome as a society as we work toward gender equity and equality?

At Tractor Outdoor, we believe that real change starts with awareness. Through our CSI initiative, our billboards can amplify the messages that can help spread the word and help break the cycle of violence, one message at a time.

6

Our Community-Based Organisations



Empowering community-based organisations to combat GBVF

Between 24 and 28 February 2025, the Fund, in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), hosted a transformative training programme for CBOs in the Western Cape. Held at the Mosaic offices in Wynberg, the training brought together the Fund-supported CBOs, enhancing their capacity to respond to GBVF within their communities.



CBOs at a capacity building workshop

The programme focused on two critical areas: the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH), and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adaptation (MERLA). Through dynamic, interactive sessions and hands-on exercises, participants gained practical tools and knowledge to foster accountability, uphold ethical standards, and improve the design and delivery of their programmes.

This initiative reflects the Fund's continued commitment to building the resilience and effectiveness of grassroots organisations. In collaboration with international partners and local facilitators, the Fund is investing in the long-term impact of CBOs, thereby empowering them to lead community-driven efforts to end GBVF and advance a safer, more just society for all.

The Fund supports CBOs for women and children

Restoration of hope with Trulife: Empowering young voices through education and the arts

Non-profit organisation Trulife is helping to shift the narrative around gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) by empowering young people with the knowledge and tools to challenge harmful social norms and foster a culture of respect and safety.

Through its innovative Changing Course programme, Trulife engages primary and high school learners in creative, interactive workshops that use storytelling, drama, and open dialogue to unpack the complex realities of GBVF. These sessions equip students to recognise the signs of abuse, understand critical concepts like consent and coercion, and build the confidence to speak out and support their peers.

The impact is tangible: learners are stepping into roles as active bystanders and community advocates, while schools report increased engagement and a noticeable shift toward safer, more inclusive environments.



Restoration of Hope facilitating a schools programme

Collaborating for impact

By working closely with schools, educators, and local partners, Trulife ensures that its impact goes beyond individual learners to influence entire school communities. As a result of these partnerships, schools have introduced improved reporting mechanisms and support structures, creating safer spaces where learners feel empowered to speak up, disclose abuse, and access help.

The programme has fostered greater awareness but also meaningful change, driving collective action and strengthening communities from the inside out.

Aligning with national strategies

Trulife's work aligns closely with the National Strategic Plan on GBVF, particularly Pillars 1, 2, 3, and 6.

Their focus on prevention, awareness, education, and safe reporting systems contributes directly to shifting harmful norms and strengthening school-based responses to violence.

Adapting to challenges

Support from the Fund has been instrumental in enabling Trulife to extend its reach to more schools, particularly in underserved communities where GBV education is needed most.

With this backing, Trulife has developed tailored resources for educators and learners, expanded its team of trained facilitators, and removed key barriers to access by covering the costs of travel, materials, and workshop delivery. This has allowed the organisation to overcome infrastructure and resource challenges, ensuring consistent, high-quality programme delivery.

Through our ongoing partnership, Trulife continues to empower young people, cultivating safer school environments and driving meaningful, lasting change in the fight against gender-based violence.



Empowering young people at the Restoration of Hope workshop

7

Thought leadership



Data as a defence against femicide in South Africa

By Tirhani Manganyi, Programmes Manager of the GBVF Response Fund

I have just returned from the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

In 2025, members of the CSW global community marked the review of the Beijing+30, regarded as the most progressive blueprint for advancing women's empowerment. It provides a framework for achieving lasting, measurable progress in ending discrimination, promoting women's rights, and advancing gender equality.

Focusing on SDG 5, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations in 2015, this year's CSW69 gathering reviewed the implementation of the Beijing Declaration over the past 30 years. The review assessed the current challenges to its implementation and its contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The journey toward gender equality stands at a critical crossroads, with stakeholders expressing deep concern that, as a global community, we are woefully lagging in our efforts.

And South Africa is not faring any better than the rest of the world.

Behind the numbers: A reality check

Shortly before Christmas last year, South Africans were horrified by yet another ghastly case of femicide when a video of a man from KwaZulu-Natal went viral on social media. In the video, which garnered over 20,000 views, he admitted to killing his 25-year-old girlfriend, displaying her lifeless body with multiple stab wounds in his car. Police later found the man hanging from a tree just meters away from where her body was discovered.

Cases like these often grab headlines, igniting temporary outrage and calls for change, yet femicide rates continue to rise. Between July and September last year, 957 women were murdered, an 8.6% increase from 881 murders in the same period in 2023, according to Q2 crime statistics for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Minister of Police Senzo Mchunu recently urged GBV victims to persevere in seeking justice. Yet, with systemic inefficiencies and without political will, a shift in how GBV is sensationalised and reported, and greater male involvement as allies against GBV, meaningful change remains elusive.

When three women die due to intimate partner femicide every day in South Africa, and with over 1,000 murdered by intimate partners annually, we cannot afford systemic inefficiencies. Yet, that's what a team of researchers from the SA Medical Research Council (MRC) and I uncovered in our groundbreaking Fourth National Femicide Study (The Study) released at the end of last year.

Our Study revealed that in 2017 and 2020/2021, 15.7% and 8.6% of femicide case dockets, respectively, were missing or misfiled in police stations. This isn't just an administrative issue; it represents real women whose stories risk being lost in bureaucracy. When case numbers change with each transfer between police stations, justice becomes obscured.

While COVID-19 exposed many of these systemic weaknesses, the fragmentation between mortuary records and police records, jurisdictional challenges, and unreliable police station contact information are deeply rooted systemic challenges that predate the pandemic and will persist unless addressed.

Data as a defence against femicide

One of South Africa's biggest challenges is the lack of a reliable and efficient system to track femicide cases, identify perpetrators, and document their relationships with victims. Without accurate data, how can we effectively tackle GBV. And, if we are not using data for prevention, what is the point of collecting it?

The Study offered valuable lessons. Researchers adopted digital tools like WhatsApp to improve communication and streamline data collection. This approach, if integrated into bureaucratic processes, could reduce delays caused by traditional administrative hurdles.

Another crucial lesson was the need for adaptable data collection methods. COVID-19 forced researchers to modify strategies, demonstrating the importance of flexibility in overcoming unexpected disruptions. Additionally, enhancing training and sensitisation for data collectors is vital to ensure accurate and reliable data while equipping them to navigate systemic challenges.

Collaboration between departments was key to the Study's success. Regular engagement with police and other stakeholders facilitated more effective data collection. Establishing interdepartmental task forces could further improve information-sharing and streamline data integration across government entities.

Building infrastructure for justice

We must refocus data collection efforts to produce actionable insights that drive targeted prevention strategies for those most at risk of femicide. As with all forms of GBV, femicide requires specific data, research, and solutions.

Piecemeal solutions are no longer enough. Addressing femicide demands political will and institutional commitment to overhaul our systems. Our research highlights not only the challenges but also the opportunities for transformation.

Can we claim to be addressing femicide effectively when our tracking and investigative systems are fundamentally flawed? The answer lies in building an infrastructure that supports justice, enables prevention, and honours every femicide victim's story.

Ending femicide requires more than outrage and promises, it demands system integration and administrative reform. It's time we recognised this and acted accordingly.

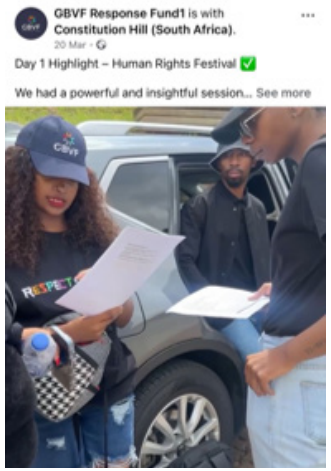
This isn't just about better record-keeping; it's about saving lives.

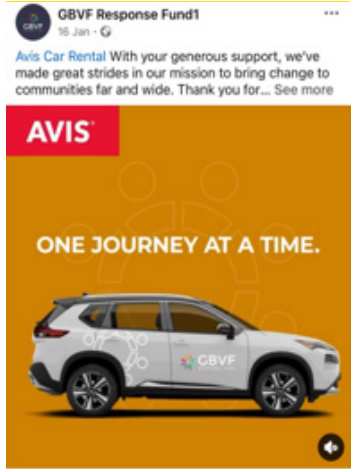
8

In The News

Our social media

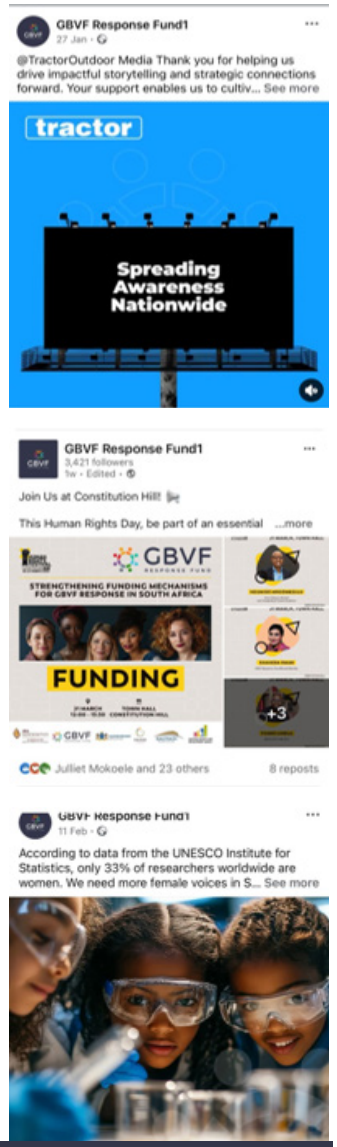








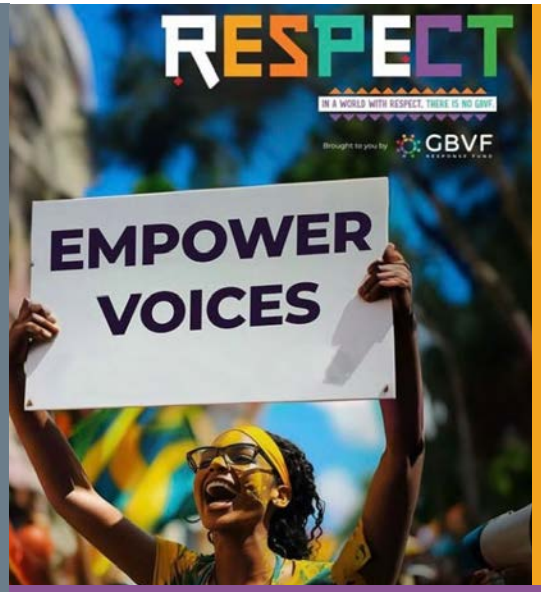




9

Hotline Numbers & Links

• National GBV Helpline	0800 150 150
• National Counselling Line	0861 322 322
• POWA	011 642 4345
• Rape Crisis	021 447 9762
• TEARS Foundation (FREE SMS Line)	*134*7355#
• Childline	08000 55555
• SADAG	080 021 2223
• Toll Free Crisis Line	086 157 4747
• Rape Crisis	021 447 9762
• Emergency	107
• Skype address for members of the community	HelpmeGBV
• GBV and Femicide Complaints by SAPS	0800 333 177
• Child abuse call back request line	SMS 'help' to 31022
• Vodacom Bright Sky App	Download on Playstore
• Whistle-blower hotline	0800 203 598



Your Empowered Voice Can Save Lives

Take Action. Report GBVF to enable a world with RESPECT.

Our website GBVF Respond Fund – Together we can take action against GBVF. (gbvfresponsefund1.org)

Find us on:

https://www.linkedin.com/company/gbvf-response-fund-1/

X (Twitter) @GBVF_Fund

GBVF Response Fund1 | Facebook

Instagram: @gbvfresponsefund1

GBVF RESPONSE FUND