Newsletter

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GBVF RESPONSE FUND

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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.

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Message from the CEO

Tandi Nzimande
CEO, GBVF Response Fund

Dear Stakeholder

As I share this message with you, I do so with deep gratitude and reflection as I near my first year as CEO of the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) Response Fund. I am profoundly appreciative of the remarkable women who led before me. My sincere thanks go to Ms Sazini Mojapelo and Ms Zanele Ngwepe for their unwavering commitment, bold leadership, and the care with which they steered the Fund. Their contributions have not only shaped our journey thus far but have also illuminated the path ahead. I am honoured to build on the strong foundation they have laid.

In February last year, our Board extended the Fund's mandate beyond December 2027, reaffirming our unwavering long-term commitment to survivors and the communities we serve. I assumed this role at a pivotal moment, where decisive leadership is required to protect hard-won gains while positioning the Fund for long-term sustainability and impact.

The Board entrusted me with a clear mandate: to ensure that survivors are never left behind, to drive meaningful prevention outcomes, and to keep GBVF firmly on the national, public, and business agendas.

We embark on this new five-year cycle to 2030, against the backdrop of an increasingly constrained global funding environment. Geopolitical fissures and changing donor priorities, including the redirection of resources away from sustainable development by major global funders, have placed unprecedented strain on community-based organisations (CBOs) in our ecosystem. These organisations remain the backbone of South Africa's GBVF response.

> **"WE ARE LEADING AN URGENT DRIVE TO REBUILD AND STRENGTHEN LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS"**

In response, we are engaged in an urgent drive to rebuild and strengthen long-term partnerships with local corporates, the South African government, global development agencies, and philanthropic institutions. Strategically, we have positioned the Fund on key global platforms, including the G20 and BRICS, attracting and unlocking new sources of funding, expanding our geographic reach, and strengthening the financial, governance, and programmatic capacity of the CBOs at the centre of our work.

A key focus of the past financial year was the successful implementation and close-out of our Second Call for Proposals (RFP2). Through a structured, phased onboarding process, and in partnership with our grant management partner, the Soul City Institute, the Fund allocated R100 million in grant funding to 135 community-based organisations across the country.

Recognising that funding alone is insufficient, we committed an additional R20 million to CBO capacity- and resource-building initiatives. This investment is focused on strengthening institutional sustainability, governance, and effectiveness at grassroots level. This dual approach reflects our long-term vision: to build resilient, capable, and impactful organisations that can sustain the fight against GBVF beyond individual funding cycles.

By reinvesting in high-performing RFP1 partners, while welcoming new organisations into our ecosystem, we continue to strengthen the long-term strategic partnerships required for meaningful and sustained change. These investments ensure that organisations on the front lines of the GBVF crisis are equipped with the resources, skills, and institutional support needed to expand their impact where it is needed most.



Tandi and the GBVF team at the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group

During Youth Month, we braved the cold and wet Cape Town winter, and joined Africa Unite at Rosendaal High School in Delft for a Teenage Pregnancy Dialogue, the first of many engagements to come. This powerful dialogue brought together learners, educators, and civil society to confront the root causes of teenage pregnancy and its links to GBVF. Young people spoke candidly, challenged existing policies, shared lived experiences, and proposed community-driven solutions. Their voices reinforced the urgency of placing youth at the centre of prevention efforts.

In July and August of 2025, the Fund strengthened private-sector collaboration through our partnership with Old Mutual during Mandela Month and Women's Month. As part of deepening the impact of the RESPECT Campaign at community level, we collaborated on a care-pack initiative in support of Matla Bana, a child protection organisation working closely with the SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Units. These care packs, distributed to child victims of violence during the criminal justice process, provide dignity, and comfort at an acutely traumatic moment. Through this initiative, more than 200 care packs were distributed across over five SAPS stations in Gauteng, directly supporting child survivors.

For the third consecutive year, the Fund amplified the RESPECT Campaign at the DStv Delicious International Food & Music Festival in September 2025. Through a curated exhibition stall, the team engaged directly with festival-goers, sharing information and promoting the national social and behavioural change approach to addressing GBVF. This activation enabled direct engagement with over 150 individuals and extended campaign visibility to more than 29,000 attendees.

In September and October of the same year, the Fund played a significant role in the coordination, planning, and participation in G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group activities. This included three build-up sessions and the flagship Positive Masculinity side event. The Fund engaged learners across five schools in Gauteng on Positive Masculinity, convened more than 300 participants for safe workplace and intergenerational dialogues, and contributed to engagements reaching over 500 delegates across G20 countries.

In addition, on the 30th of October 2025, the Fund coordinated a High-Level Ministerial Business Breakfast in collaboration with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities and UNFPA. The engagement aimed to position the Fund as a proven model for mobilising business leadership and securing commitments to impact-driven GBVF prevention and response interventions, while catalysing new multilateral partnerships and strengthening existing ones.

Looking ahead, prevention remains a central pillar of our work, particularly the need to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. This begins where it matters most: in our schools. Through our collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, we are working to embed GBV prevention within the school environment by leveraging existing structures and systems. Our objective is to make prevention a foundational part of the learning journey, intervening early to disrupt harmful norms before they take root.

The consistent and resounding voices of young people throughout these engagements have reinforced a critical truth: GBVF cannot be addressed in isolation from inequality, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and persistent realities of poverty. As my children often say, “watch this space.” We remain deeply committed to supporting sustained, youth-led initiatives that drive behavioural change at a generational level.

> **YOUR PARTNERSHIP REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO ENSURING THAT NO SURVIVOR IS LEFT BEHIND**

Over the next five years, the Fund will implement a renewed strategy focused on addressing the deeply rooted enablers of GBVF, expanding our reach into identified hotspots and underserved communities, and strengthening the GBVF sector to withstand ongoing funding uncertainties. Our legacy will not be measured by budgets alone, but by lives impacted, cultures and mindsets transformed, barriers dismantled, and a sector strengthened to continue the fight regardless of funding challenges.

I firmly believe that our attitudes and choices not only shape who we are as individuals but also define the kind of society we create and the legacy we leave.

Your partnership remains essential to ensuring that no survivor is left behind. I invite each of you, our partners, allies, and champions, to join us in co-creating and safeguarding the future we want to see.

Yours sincerely

Tandi Nzimande
CEO, GBVF Response Fund



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Introducing our Team

Lindokuhle Shabalala
Monitoring Evaluation Research and Learning Officer (MERL Officer)

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 began this journey?

I will be candid: I was not familiar with the Fund before joining. However, once I learned about its inception and mandate, I quickly recognised the magnitude of the work still required in the sector.

One of the most significant gaps I observed is the persistent framing of GBVF as a "women's issue," when in reality it is a societal crisis that demands collective responsibility. Men, in particular, must be at the forefront of prevention and accountability.

That realisation has continued to shape and strengthen my motivation. As I have become more immersed in the work of the organisation, my commitment has deepened, driven by the opportunity to contribute to systemic change that engages all sectors of society.

2. Before joining the Fund, what professional experiences shaped your career, and how do they inform your current role?

I began my career as an online language consultant, working with international learners of all ages who wanted to learn English. This role involved extensive engagement with children and reinforced for me the importance of shaping attitudes and behaviours at a young, formative stage. It truly begins there.

I later joined the National Lotteries Commission, initially as a Monitoring and Evaluation Intern and subsequently as a Grant Officer. This experience provided me with critical insight into the role of funding and the importance of directing resources to the right organisations to maximise impact.



Lindokuhle at the Men Unite Against GBVF march

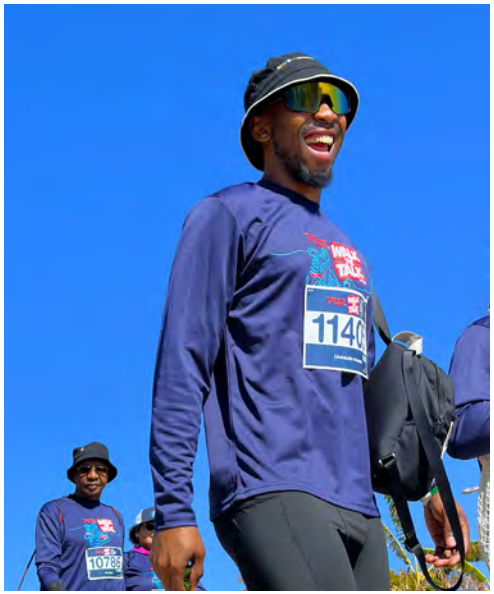
Community-based organisations possess deep contextual knowledge of the communities they serve, enabling them to design interventions that are responsive and effective.

Given that GBVF affects every part of the country, and that social and cultural dynamics vary widely, what works in Sandton may not necessarily work in Empangeni. Integrating the lessons from both roles has been deeply fulfilling and directly informs how I approach my work at the Fund.

3. From your perspective, how can collaboration be strengthened to realise the mandate of the Fund?

Meaningful collaboration is built on resource-sharing, mutual respect, and active stakeholder engagement. We are all working towards a shared goal: a South Africa free of gender-based violence. While each stakeholder brings expertise in a specific area, no single entity can address this crisis alone.

By sharing knowledge, resources, and capabilities, and by working in partnership rather than in silos, we can significantly amplify our collective impact and drive sustainable change



Lindokuhle at the 2025 702 Walk the Talk



Lindokuhle at the 2025 Pride March

3

Q & A with Fund Partner

SABC
Fund partner

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

As South Africa's public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has a mandate not only to entertain, but also to inform and educate the public on critical national issues. Through compelling programming and corporate social investment (CSI) initiatives, the SABC supports non-governmental organisations working to eradicate the scourge of gender-based violence.

GBV is an issue that requires sustained public attention. Through Public Service Announcements (PSAs), radio and television programming, and community-focused initiatives, the SABC ensures that awareness messages reach millions of South Africans.

Our diverse portfolio of radio stations and television channels also provides platforms for national dialogue, enabling citizens to engage meaningfully on solutions to this societal crisis.

2. To drive social change, what decisive actions can corporate South Africa take to prevent and monitor GBVF in the workplace?

The SABC is committed to producing meaningful, multi-dimensional content in collaboration with experts, survivors, NGOs, government institutions, businesses, and civil society organisations that have long been at the forefront of this work.

Through our programming and CSI initiatives, we aim to encourage public and private institutions, as well as society at large, to play an active role in addressing GBV. The SABC raises awareness and provides practical information and resources by producing content across a range of genres and in all 11 official languages.

Most recently, the SABC Radio portfolio launched a campaign across its 19 radio stations to amplify the fight against GBV. This ongoing initiative focuses on raising awareness of the harm caused by GBV while delivering targeted educational content aimed at empowering corporate South Africa, educating young people, supporting caregivers, and mobilising communities.

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

The SABC's partnership with the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Response Fund is strategic and essential. Both organisations play a critical role in addressing GBV, and together we are able to significantly extend the reach and impact of prevention and awareness efforts.

Through our 19 radio stations, broadcasting in all 11 official languages, the SABC has provided space for Public Service Announcements developed by the Fund. By amplifying the Fund's key messages across our platforms, we are helping to ensure that GBV prevention and response efforts reach communities in every corner of the country.

4. What is one critical change needed now to move South Africa closer to a GBVF-free society?

Addressing unemployment, inequality, and poverty is fundamental. These structural challenges are closely linked to the prevalence of GBV and must be tackled as part of a comprehensive national response.

Equally important is instilling values of respect, tolerance, and non-violence from an early age. By teaching children to value one another, embrace difference, and practise empathy, we lay the foundation for a society rooted in dignity, equality, and peace.

5. From your perspective, what obstacles must we still overcome as a society in the pursuit of gender equity and equality?

One of the ongoing challenges is resistance to change, particularly in relation to shifting gender roles and leadership dynamics. As more women assume leadership positions, some men struggle to accept this reality.

Advancing gender equity requires men to recognise women as equals and to understand that women are equally capable of leading and shaping society. At the same time, continued investment in empowering women is essential to ensure they can realise their full potential in all spheres of life.

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Advocacy Work

Intersectionality GBV x Child Abuse Webinar

The GBVF Response Fund, in partnership with Mail & Guardian, hosted a high-impact webinar addressing the intersecting crises of gender-based violence and child abuse in South Africa. Titled “Are we desensitised to abuse? Child pregnancy as a symptom, not a starting point”, the webinar examined the deeply rooted links between child abuse and child pregnancy, reframing pregnancy resulting from statutory rape as a consequence of systemic failure rather than an isolated event.

The discussion underscored the urgent need to strengthen legal enforcement and advance reform as a core component of prevention and response interventions.
Moderated by Lenore Edwards, Founder of Cultivate Co, the dialogue featured expert contributions from UNICEF South Africa, the Department of Basic Education, the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, Save the Children South Africa, Community Keepers, and the Teddy Bear Foundation. Drawing on evidence, policy perspectives, and lived experiences from the ground, speakers interrogated the cultural norms and structural inequalities that continue to perpetuate child abuse and early pregnancy.

The webinar created a critical space for cross-sector engagement, bringing together non-profit organisations and government stakeholders to reflect on gaps within the current system and to propose more integrated, survivor-centred approaches.

The session concluded with a powerful call to action from the Teddy Bear Foundation’s Clinical Director, Dr Shaheda Omar, who emphasised the importance of collective, multi-sectoral efforts to protect children’s rights. She further highlighted the central role of robust data and research in shaping effective interventions, alongside the necessity of sustained collaboration to address these complex societal challenges.

This dialogue marked an important step in mobilising coordinated action to dismantle systemic barriers to a holistic GBV response. It reinforced the critical role of community-based engagement, bringing together families, schools, and local structures to strengthen prevention and awareness, while underscoring the need for sustained advocacy for legal reform, including stronger enforcement against statutory rape and more robust legal frameworks to protect children from exploitation.



Intersectionality GBV x Child Abuse Webinar banner

Mandela Day: 67 Minutes and Women's Month x Old Mutual

In observance of Mandela Day, the Fund, in partnership with Old Mutual's Women's Network, Matla a Bana, and the SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit, collaborated on a care-pack initiative that embodied the spirit of 67 Minutes of service and deepened cross-sector engagement.

Through this initiative, the partners assembled more than 200 care packs to support child victims of violence as they navigate the difficult and often traumatic criminal justice process. The care packs were formally handed over to Matla a Bana and the SAPS FCS Unit, reinforcing a shared commitment to protecting children and strengthening frontline responses.



Assembling care packs at the 67 Minutes and Woman's Month event

As Women's Month drew to a close, the partnership was further strengthened through the provision and distribution of additional comfort packs for child survivors. Recognising that children are integral to women's lives, and that their protection is central to the wellbeing of children and their mothers, the initiative underscored the interconnected nature of survivor support.

Each pack, containing essential items such as underwear, snacks, and toiletries, offered more than material assistance. The care packs helped restore dignity and provided comfort to children during some of the most distressing moments of their interaction with the justice system, particularly during evidence-gathering processes.

Members of the SAPS Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit shared powerful reflections on the impact of the initiative, noting that even small acts of care, such as providing a snack, can significantly ease the distress of children who often arrive at facilities hungry, frightened, and highly vulnerable. This initiative underscores the critical importance of cross-sector partnerships in delivering compassionate, survivor-centred responses.

Through this collaborative effort, more than 200 care packs were distributed across over five SAPS stations in Gauteng, directly supporting child survivors of violence.

The 702 Walk the Talk

The Fund was proud to participate in the 702 Walk the Talk on 27 July 2025, as part of its ongoing observance of Mandela Month and its commitment to promoting unity in the fight against gender-based violence. Members of the Fund joined thousands of participants in completing the 6.7-kilometre route, symbolising 67 minutes of service in honour of Mandela Day.

The walk commenced at Freedom Park and concluded at the Union Buildings, traversing key heritage landmarks that reflect South Africa's enduring legacy of resilience, struggle, and hope.

More than a symbolic gesture, the event provided a platform to demonstrate solidarity, raise public awareness, and actively "walk the talk" against a pervasive social ill that continues to undermine the safety, dignity, and humanity of too many South Africans. The Fund remains resolute in its year-round commitment to ending gender-based violence and contributing to the broader effort to eliminate all forms of violence in society.



GBVF team at a milestone during the 702 Walk the Talk

The GBVF Response Fund at the TCC Day of Learning

The GBVF Response Fund was proud to participate in the recent Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCC) Day of Learning, where the Fund shared a message of support and contributed to a dynamic panel discussion alongside key stakeholders, including Glencore, Seriti, and other corporate partners supporting the TCC initiative.

The Fund's contribution underscored the critical importance of partnerships in driving collective impact and reaffirmed its commitment to survivor-centred approaches in the delivery of post-violence care and support services.

This engagement forms part of an ongoing tripartite partnership between the Minerals Council, the GBVF Response Fund, and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening TCC services and enhancing access to coordinated, quality support for survivors of gender-based violence.

The event also marked the launch of the TCC National Partnership 2024 Report, which highlighted key milestones achieved, lessons learned, and renewed calls for deeper and more sustained stakeholder collaboration across the GBVF prevention and response value chain. A clear takeaway from the Day of Learning was the transformative potential of public–private partnerships when anchored in strong governance, accountability, and responsive leadership.

The Fund commends the Minerals Council member companies and all partners for their continued commitment to advancing survivor-centred, system-strengthening responses to GBVF.



Zanele Ngwepe, the Fund's Head of Finance & Operations, at the TCC Day of Learning

The 2025 DStv Delicious Festival

The Fund once again partnered with the 2025 DStv Delicious International Food and Music Festival to demonstrate the unifying power of music while amplifying the RESPECT message, an impactful call to action to prevent gender-based violence and femicide.

Through an interactive exhibition stall, the Fund created a visible and engaging platform to raise awareness about its mandate and the impact of its work. Festival-goers engaged directly with the Fund's team, learned more about ongoing initiatives, and received branded T-shirts, water bottles, and bucket hats as tokens of appreciation.

The activation sparked meaningful conversations around GBVF prevention and significantly increased awareness of the Fund's work. It also strengthened public engagement, with many attendees connecting with the Fund on social media to remain informed, show solidarity, and participate in ongoing efforts to drive behavioural and social change.



The Fund during an outreach at the 2025 DStv Delicious Festival

The G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group

The Fund played a pivotal role in the lead-up to the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG) engagements, culminating in the high-level Positive Masculinity Side Event. Collectively, these engagements convened more than 1,000 delegates from across G20 countries, creating an influential platform to advance dialogue on gender equality, safe workplaces, and intergenerational engagement.

Through these initiatives, the Fund, in collaboration with strategic partners, engaged over 300 participants from the private sector, government, and development organisations in focused discussions on workplace safety and intergenerational dialogue. In parallel, the EWWG outreach extended to learners across five schools in Gauteng through targeted Positive Masculinity programming, reinforcing the importance of early intervention and prevention.

The flagship Positive Masculinity Side Event alone brought together more than 500 delegates, underscoring the power of partnership, shared accountability, and global solidarity in addressing complex socio-economic challenges linked to gender-based violence.

In addition, the Fund co-hosted a High-Level Ministerial Business Breakfast with UNFPA on the margins of the Side Event, showcasing the Fund's model for effective public–private collaboration in preventing and responding to violence. These engagements not only strengthened existing partnerships but also catalysed new multilateral relationships at a global level.



Koketso Rathumbu, the Fund's Advocacy & Comms manager, and Tandi Nzimande at the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group event

Youth-Focused RESPECT Campus Activations

The Fund, in partnership with Higher Health, successfully hosted its first Campus Activation at Coastal TVET College in Durban on the 15th of October 2025. The event brought together over 200 students from Coastal College and nearby institutions, including the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, and Mangosuthu University of Technology.

Supported by more than 50 provincial stakeholders, including the Mayor's Office, the SAPS FCS Unit, the NPA, district health partners, and local community-based organisations. The activation strengthened youth mobilisation and fostered collaboration across the higher education ecosystem.

The initiative provided a platform for meaningful student engagement across multiple campuses and reinforced the Fund's commitment to inclusive, youth-centred approaches to GBVF awareness, education, and prevention.



Koketso at the Youth-Focused RESPECT Campus Activation

The 2025 Pride Parade

For the third consecutive year, the Fund proudly participated in the Johannesburg Pride Parade, engaging in build-up activities such as the empowerment summit, exhibitions, and direct interaction with event attendees. During the parade, the Fund marched alongside approximately 20,000 participants, including the Johannesburg City Mayor and the Deputy Minister of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities.

The Fund's participation demonstrated solidarity with the LGBQIA+ community and reinforced its commitment to combating hate crimes and sexuality-motivated violence. The festival that followed the parade attracted over 55,000 attendees, providing a platform to amplify GBVF prevention messaging across festival screens and raise awareness among a wide and diverse audience.



GBVF Fund at the 2025 Pride Parade

16 Days of Activism

To reinforce the ongoing fight against GBVF beyond the 16 Days of Activism campaign, the Fund actively supported, participated in, and collaborated with a range of national initiatives throughout this period. These efforts strengthened partnerships and ensured alignment across multiple platforms, including the official launch of the 16 Days of Activism under the theme “Technology-Facilitated GBVF”.

The Fund contributed to the broadcasting of public service messaging through pro-bono media partners, including SABC and Tractor Outdoor Media. In addition, it supported a Men’s March, participated in a radio segment highlighting GBV as a human rights violation, and engaged in the International Human Rights Day commemoration hosted by Constitution Hill, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, and other partners.

To conclude the 16 Days of Activism, the Fund co-hosted a dialogue with Mail & Guardian titled “Men as Allies: Are We Meaningfully Engaging Men in the Fight Against GBV?” The session offered diverse insights and perspectives on innovative approaches to involving men as partners, rather than solely as perpetrators, in the fight against GBVF.



Tirhani Manganyi, the Fund’s Programmes manager, at the launch of the 2025 16 Days of Activism theme at First Rand’s Move It event



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Campaign News



Public Service Announcements; National Women's Month and 16 days of Activism

During key commemorative periods, including Women's Month, National Women's Month, and the 16 Days of Activism, the Fund, in partnership with the SABC, broadcasted GBVF prevention messaging across 19 radio stations in 11 official languages, reaching communities nationwide.

This ongoing collaboration amplifies the Fund's voice and call to action on mainstream media platforms, ensuring that critical messaging reaches diverse audiences, including rural and peri-urban communities, and reinforces the message of collective responsibility in addressing GBVF.

The Fund's Public Service Announcement partner, SABC

Billboards: Youth Month, National Women's Month, and 16 days of Activism

Through its partnership with Tractor Outdoor Media, the Fund was able to display billboards across Gauteng, the Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal during key commemorative periods, including Youth Month, National Women's Month, and the 16 Days of Activism.

Pro-bono collaborations of this kind provide the Fund with significant public visibility, reinforcing its presence in communities and strategic spaces while strengthening engagement with stakeholders across the country.



The Fund's National Women's Month billboard



The Fund's 16 Days of Activism billboard



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CBO Impact Stories



CBO Site visits

As part of its ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts, the Fund, in partnership with its grant management partner, the Soul City Institute (SCI), conducted On-Site Data Verification (OSDV) visits to 94 community-based organisations (CBOs) across the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, North-West, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and Eastern Cape provinces. These visits aimed to verify the accuracy and completeness of reported programme data, while also gathering qualitative feedback on the effectiveness and relevance of the Fund's support.

The OSDV visits confirmed that CBOs are delivering impactful services aligned with Pillars 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF), demonstrating strong commitment and responsiveness at community level.

Beyond data verification, the visits served as a capacity-strengthening intervention. The team provided tailored technical assistance on best practices in data collection, reporting, and documentation, enhancing CBOs' ability to use data for evidence-based planning and decision-making.

Insights and feedback gathered during the visits will inform continuous learning and adaptive management within the Fund, guiding refinements to strategies and interventions to ensure future support is increasingly targeted, responsive, and aligned with identified gaps and implementation challenges.

The findings and recommendations arising from the OSDV process will directly inform future programming and capacity-building initiatives, contributing to a stronger, more effective, and more resilient GBVF response ecosystem.

CBO Profiling: Childline Mpumalanga

Childline Mpumalanga: Protecting children, strengthening communities

Childline Mpumalanga (CLMPU) plays a critical role in protecting vulnerable children and families across the province through a combination of direct response services, prevention programmes, and community engagement. At the heart of its work is a 24-hour toll-free helpline, available to children and adults who have concerns about child safety and wellbeing.

Over the past financial year, the helpline received more than 50,000 calls from children. Of these, over 2,000 were identified as serious cases requiring immediate intervention. As a result of Childline Mpumalanga's response, the children involved are now safe. In addition, the organisation's social work therapy team provided direct support in 960 cases related to child abuse and child protection, as well as 4,911 cases involving GBV and psychosocial support across the province.

Prevention remains a central pillar of CLMPU's work. Through its Child Abuse Prevention Programme (CAPP), the organisation reached 4,956 children in 23 schools, delivering age-appropriate awareness sessions focused on child abuse, GBV, and how to seek help when at risk. These early interventions are designed to empower children with knowledge and support before harm occurs.



Childline Mpumalanga handing out Girls dignity packs in schools

Childline Mpumalanga remains committed to mobilising financial and community support to sustain its services. The organisation upholds strong financial governance and transparent management practices, ensuring accountability to funders, partners, and the communities it serves.

Like many organisations in the sector, CLMPU has faced significant challenges due to funding constraints. Following the withdrawal of USAID PEPFAR funding, the organisation has had to downscale its operations, limiting prevention and awareness activities and concentrating primarily on response services within hospital settings. Resource limitations, including reduced travel budgets and vehicle availability, have further constrained outreach across the province.

Emergency funding from the GBVF Response Fund has however been instrumental in enabling Childline Mpumalanga to continue some of its work. This support has allowed the organisation to sustain four GBV response and care offices located in provincial hospitals, as well as maintain its school-based prevention programme linked to the provincial office.

At a time of heightened need, this key partnership has ensured continuity of care and protection for some of Mpumalanga's most vulnerable children and families.



7

Thought leadership



When the place meant to nurture becomes the place that harms

Schools should be sanctuaries of learning, growth, and possibility. Yet for too many South African children, they have become places of fear.

By Tandi Nzimande, Chief Executive Officer at the GBVF Response Fund

Confronting all types of violence in South African schools

Schools are the first formal spaces where young minds learn the values of collaboration and mutual respect. They have a vital role in shaping positive social norms, fostering healthy expressions of social expectations of the role of a boy or a man, and teaching the social and behavioural skills needed to break cycles of violence that generations of the same families have experienced and been traumatised by.

Yet, for too many children, schools have become places of fear rather than safety. Violence has taken root in some classrooms and corridors, eroding the culture of care, protection, and support that education is meant to nurture.

This reality is why South Africa's G20 Presidency has placed addressing school-based gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) high on the agenda of the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group (EWWG), of which the Fund was a member.

In the latter part of 2025, the EWWG hosted a dialogue series that laid the groundwork for proposed commitments and priority areas, which were presented at the EWWG Ministerial Meeting in October 2025 and further advanced at the G20 Summit of Heads of State in November 2025.

As South Africa steps onto the global stage through its G20 Presidency, driving vital conversations and commitments to combat gender-based violence among other key G20 priorities at the highest international levels, we are also forced to confront a difficult truth: The violence we condemn in our homes and in our offices continues to unfold daily in our classrooms, change rooms and on our playgrounds.

The numbers tell a devastating story

Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) in schools can take many forms, from sexual harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender, to bullying, threats, ridicule, and exclusion. These behaviours are not only humiliating, intimidating, and traumatic in the moment; they also sow the seeds of long-term harm.

They shape how young people see themselves and the world around them, eroding their sense of safety, belonging, and self-worth. Over time, these experiences can shrink their horizons, distort their understanding of healthy relationships, and leave lasting scars on their mental health and overall well-being.

While much of this violence occurs out of sight, behind closed doors or in unsupervised

spaces, its most brutal expressions often surface online, with videos of these attacks going viral across social media.
Globally, according to UNICEF, half of students aged 13 to 15, some 150 million, report experiencing peer-to-peer violence in and around their schools. In 2025, South Africa has seen a concerning rise in school-based violence, with a 35.4% increase in reported cases of abuse and sexual harassment of pupils by teachers, reaching 111 cases in 2024/2025, and over 500 bullying incidents reported in the first term (SABC News, Citation2025).

Behind each statistic is a child whose potential is being stolen, whose future is being fractured, whose brain, still forming those critical 1,000 neural connections every second, is being flooded with toxic stress instead of opportunity.

Acts of school-related GBVH are not isolated events; they reflect a worsening crisis. This crisis is driven by underlying harmful social norms, often driven by unequal power relations, and toxic forms of masculinity, weak accountability systems that deny survivors justice and enable perpetrators to act with impunity.

When violence becomes normal

GBVH thrives in silence. It is masked by shame, protected by fear, and normalised in environments where violence is treated as inevitable rather than intolerable. Girls are particularly vulnerable in a society where patriarchal norms leave them unprotected and undervalued. But boys are affected too, not only as victims, but as witnesses and future men being shaped by the violence they see and the toxic masculinities they are taught to emulate.

The cycle is vicious and self-perpetuating. Children who witness domestic and other types of violence carry that trauma into their relationships. Boys learn that violence is power. Girls learn that submission is survival.

When a child experiences or witnesses violence at school or at home, the impact reverberates through every aspect of their development, emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and social. Their ability to learn is compromised. Their capacity to form healthy relationships is damaged. Their future is being determined not by their potential but by the violence they have endured.

Schools as places of transformation

Schools are microcosms of society. They reflect our values, reproduce our norms, and shape the citizens we will become. If we can transform schools into spaces that actively challenge toxic masculinities and negative stereotypes and promote norms that embrace gender equality and positive masculinities, we can interrupt the transmission of violence from one generation to the next.

The Department of Basic Education, in collaboration with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, the Fund, UNICEF and other role players within the EWWG, recently convened a dialogue which involved five schools across Gauteng, North-West, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal, demonstrating what is possible when we centre children's voices in solutions.

The objectives of our intervention were clear: promote positive masculinities and respectful relationships among 15- to 17-year-olds; facilitate early conversations on violence prevention; and provide learners with platforms to dismantle toxic masculinities.

Furthermore, the Fund partnered with Constitution Hill and the We, the People South Africa campaign to deliver a school outreach programme at Teto Secondary School in Sasolburg. The programme included workshops on the Bill of Rights and constitutional literacy, as well as a segment on the RESPECT gender-based violence prevention campaign.

Through intergenerational dialogues involving learners, parents, educators, and school governing bodies, these schools discussed various approaches to violence prevention, driven by the voices of learners acknowledging their lived experiences

What must change

The Fund is clear on what must change.

Firstly, we must dismantle the harmful gender norms that fuel violence. Respect, consent, and equality cannot be optional values; they must be foundational. Boys and girls aged 15 to 17 are at a critical juncture. Interventions at this age can establish lifelong patterns of respectful behaviour and break cycles that have persisted for generations.

Secondly, we must demand a justice system that puts children first, protects survivors, and holds perpetrators accountable without delay or excuse. Deep-rooted cultural norms and stigma silence victims, especially when perpetrators are family members or authority figures. Under-resourcing of law enforcement and social services compound the problem. We need systems that work, not policies that exist only on paper.

Thirdly, we must support the caregivers, teachers, social workers, nurses, police officers, and community leaders who serve as the first line of defence. Their work is vital, but they cannot do it alone. They need resources, training, and institutional backing. We hope to seesome of these constrainsts receiving urgent attention following the declaration of GBVF as a national disaster.

Children's voices matter

Most importantly, we must listen. Children need to be seen, heard, and believed. They must be provided with safe spaces to speak up and assured of protection. When children are given these spaces, they will speak. When they know their voices matter, they will use them.

As one participant in the G20 dialogues emphasised, there is very little that children can do on their own to respond to GBVH. But if they are given safe spaces, they will speak up. Every act of violence or sexual abuse case is unique. It is only by listening to individual stories that collective and meaningful progress can be made.

This is why feeding children's voices into the G20 Ministerial Dialogue was crucial. The solutions cannot be designed without them. They are not just the beneficiaries of our interventions; they are also the architects of change.

The choice before us

Amid growing concerns that human rights issues are being sidelined in global forums, now is the time to reaffirm our shared responsibility. Every child has the right to grow up free from harm, fear, and neglect. Whether at home, at school, or in the community, we must create environments that protect children.

The question is not whether we can afford to address GBVH in schools. The question is whether we can afford not to.

Safeguarding our children is not a one-time event or an annual campaign. It is a lifelong commitment that begins with each of us, in what we treat as "normal", what we tolerate, what we teach, and what we choose to act on.

When we fail to protect children, we fail tomorrow's citizens, consumers, workers, thinkers, and innovators. Their abilities will drive tomorrow's businesses. Their productivity will fuel tomorrow's economies. Their capacity to contribute will shape tomorrow's societies.

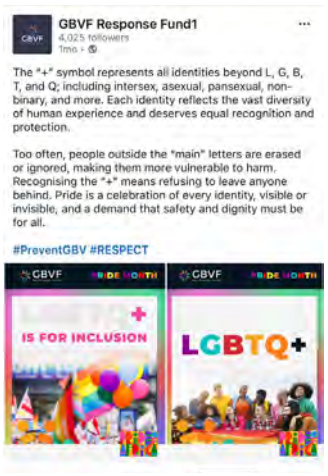
We cannot afford to fail them.

8

In The News

Our social media





















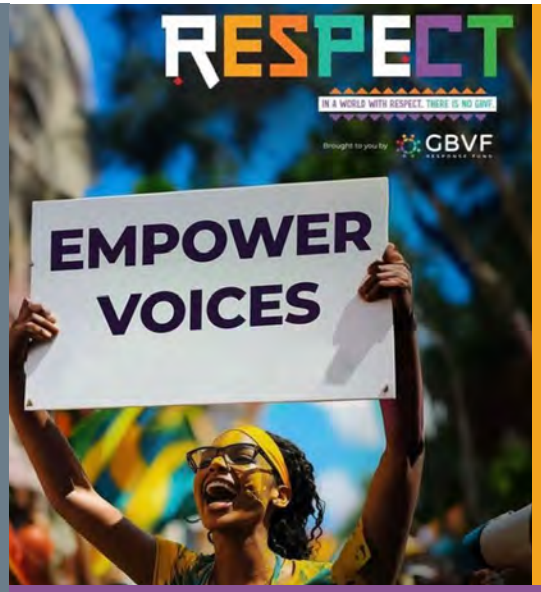




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Hotline Numbers & Links

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

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