

# Empowering Women - Ending Violence in Southern Africa



**Susan Swart** took the microphone with confidence at the SADC Gender Protocol@Work Summit in 2014 and declared: "I overcame, so can you?" Her emotional anguish of living with an abusive husband finally surfaced after her husband decided she was not good enough anymore and left her and her two kids to fend for themselves. She thought long and hard about the business ventures she could pursue. She registered a catering business and started with a donated chip-making machine. In 2013, Swart attended the Gender Links (GL) entrepreneurship training programme for survivors of gender violence and said that since then she has never looked back. As she put it: "GL taught me how to fly. I was encouraged to encourage others and was empowered to empower myself. I want to tell everyone that they can overcome, just like I have. My business is still growing and I know it will keep growing. GL has provided me with the platform and the freedom to be the best that I can." Within minutes the whole marquee, with over 400 regional delegates, rose to its feet, applauding the will and drive of this woman.



Susan Swart, Emerging Entrepreneur from Cape Aghulas Municipality at the SADC Gender Protocol@Work Summit. Credit: Albert Ngosa

## KEY FACTS

- 1350 survivors of GBV in 101 councils in ten Southern African countries trained as entrepreneurs.
- 91% completed a business plan and 79% followed through on the plan.
- The average increase in income per month for the region is R526; the overall increase in income in 2015 as a result of the project is R10.8 million; a 66% increase.
- 59% added new products and 54% found new markets; 48% indicated starting a new business and 29% increased the size of their business; 41% opened a bank account and 35% increased email usage.
- 85% of participants said they now experience less or much less GBV. Overall, the relationship control index increased by four percentage points to 66%.
- Gender attitudes as measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS) in the communities increased by two percentage points to 63%. At 70% the participants had a seven percentage point higher GPS than their communities.
- Councils provided almost R6 million in in-kind support to the project.
- Participants gave the councils an overall rating of 89%.

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

## Why this project?

Since its founding in 2001 GL has worked with over 2000 women in documenting their experiences of Gender based Violence (GBV). GL has also conducted GBV prevalence surveys in Mauritius, Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho that that one in four (Mauritius) to four in five women (Zambia) have experienced gender violence. The most likely forms of violence are also those least likely to be reported to the police - economic, psychological and verbal abuse. Many women spoke about

"My business is prosperous and I am now able to provide for the family. I no longer rely on my husband because depending on him was the source of the abuse that I suffered in his hands. I spent most of the time doing my business and I am no longer able to dwell much on my husband's abusive behaviour. The fear that he instilled in me is no longer there and I am now an independent woman."  
*Rejoice M, Gweru Zimbabwe*

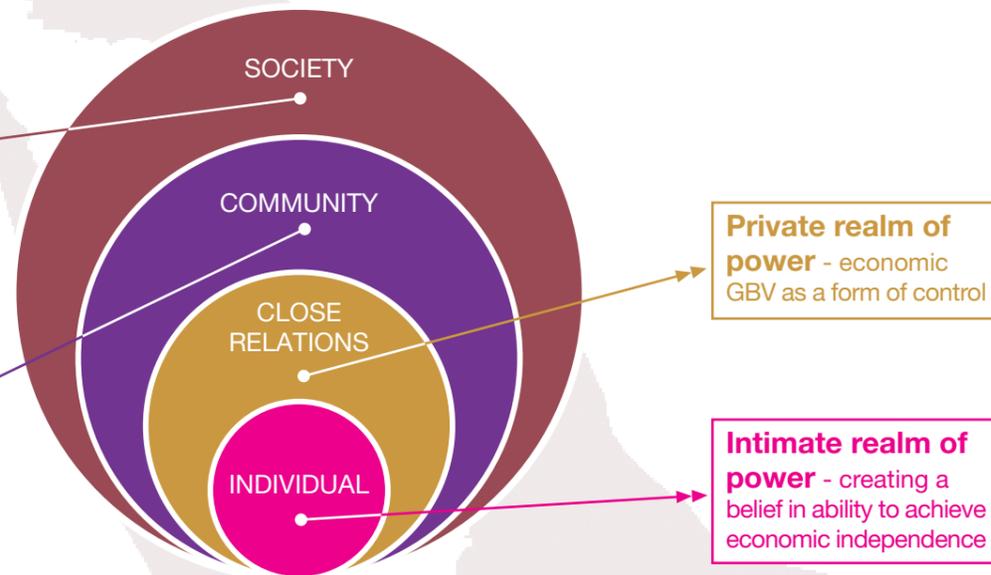
staying in or returning to abusive relationships because they lacked economic independence or experienced financial control as a form of abuse. GL set out to test the links between economic empowerment and ending GBV.

## What the project involved

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

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

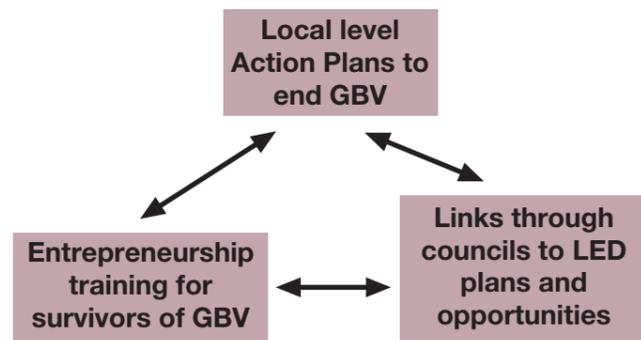
**Community realm of power** - local government, private sector, NGOs and funders support



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

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

Key partners in the project included 10 councils in each of ten Southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) that form part of the Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government. The councils helped to identify participants, improve access to markets, infrastructure, finance, mentorship and support. Altogether councils provided R5 935 281 in support of the COE programme across the ten countries in cash and in kind.



## Key results

Some important outcomes are demonstrated in the personal accounts of participants through "I" stories and interviews:

One of the key aims was achieved increases in **income** for the women. "In the past I couldn't make decisions in the house because my husband was always dominating me. He did not respect me because I was not earning any income. I was not happy because my husband forced me to accept decisions that he made. He thought I was not mature enough to make the right decision. After I got the training for starting a business everything went back to normal in the house. This workshop helped me because I am getting income from my business. I make clothes for children and women and the business is really progressing well, even although I was facing challenges at the beginning."  
*Donatilla Amwaalwa from Oshikuku in Namibia*

In some cases survivors have been able to **provide jobs** for others in their community. In order to improve the productivity of her business, Allensia Garab from Outja,

Namibia opted to hire one person who is assisting her to do much of the work especially selling finished products and washing bakery dishes. She managed to register this person with social security commission and is paying her a reasonable salary.

Before the project started some of the women were already running small businesses and have said they have been able to **improve how they run the businesses**. "Before the training I was not interested in doing business as such. I was teaching swimming but after the training I learned that I could also earn extra money. I am still doing my swimming classes but with an added twist. I prepare snacks and sell this to those who come to swimming lessons. Thanks to the training I have been able to develop this idea. My family especially my daughter really appreciates the fact that I have been able to get a chance to make the most of my old age."  
*Dorine Volafite Beau Bassin, Mauritius*

Many of the women have expressed having **more self-confidence** because they have learned more about GBV and running a business which has given them more status in their homes and the community. "Attending the training has empowered me on GBV issues and where we can get help when we meet those problems. I never knew that I had the right to refuse if my husband forced me to sleep with him. Meeting other GBV survivors and sharing ideas made me to understand that I was not suffering alone. It

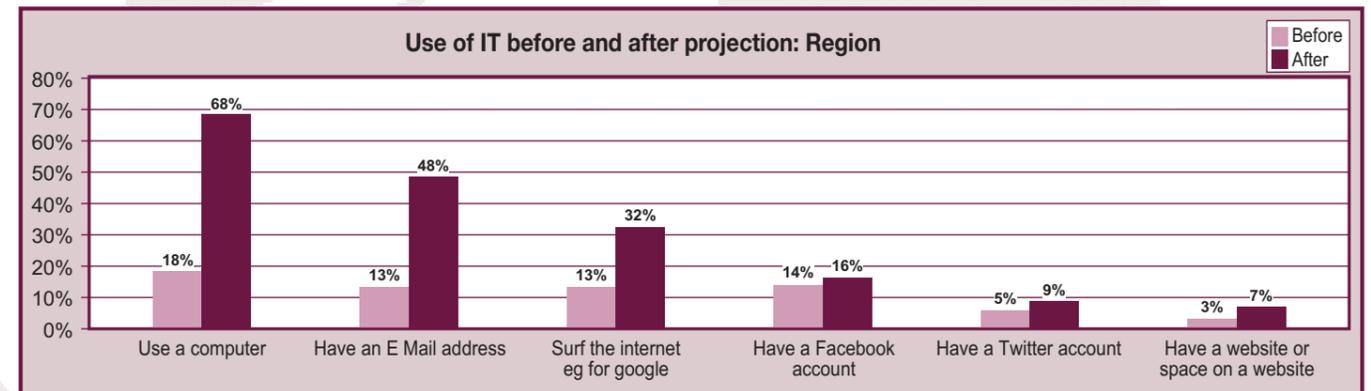


Allensia Garab from Namibia proudly shows her handiwork. Credit: Gender Links

turned my life around and I regret ever thinking about taking my life. I managed to grasp the necessary skills to grow and manage my business."

*Bongiswa Matsenjwa from Lavumisa, Swaziland*

One of the main aims of the project was to **increase survivor's personal agency** and many have indicated positive changes in their relationships. "I now know where I am today. I have learned to be strong and stand up for myself as a woman. I have experienced violence from my husband. We fought a lot about money. These days we can talk about our problems as adults and mostly I am the one who has to initiate the talking."  
*Thembakazi Ngemntu from Bitou, South Africa*



Source: Gender Links.

The programme brought about a sea change in **IT skills**. As illustrated in the graph, 68% women now use a computer compared to 18% at the start of the project. 48% have access to E Mail (compared to 13% at the start). 32% surf the internet (compared to 13% at the start). 7% now have a website or space on a website, compared to 3% at the start.

The programme has helped Centres of Excellence for Gender in local government to **put their gender action plans to work**. "From the action plan generated during the gender training workshops, the council has managed to develop a drafted HIV policy, which is engendered. The council has also been quite proactive in considering women for job opportunities particularly in waste management, and fire emergency response. This action as come as a result of the entrepreneurship programme being carried out in partnership with Gender Links."  
*- Lusaka Council*

Gender Links measures **progress in gender attitudes in communities** using the Gender Progress Score (GPS). Overall this increased from 61% to 63% in the 101 councils during the short space of this programme. At an average of 70%, the participants had a significantly higher GPS. These encouraging findings underscore the need to continue the work started, especially ensuring that councils provide a supportive environment for change.

The Berseba Council in Namibia is an example of a council that has taken ownership of the entrepreneurship project by ensuring that it is accompanied by a strong Sixteen Days of Activism and year-long campaign to end gender violence that includes fighting alcohol abuse and a 'Men for Change Organisation'. The village is attracting investors to promote economic empowerment, and supporting participants to benefit from these opportunities.



Berseba Village council receiving a certificate as runner up in the category of best COE at the National Gender Summit in Windhoek, Namibia.

Credit: Gender Links

These are fundamental changes in the lives of the participants, their families, communities and local government structures which together have the power to end GBV through changes in survivor's individual, close relationships, communities and societal areas of change. This project has shown that possibility of ending GBV through the combination of life skills and entrepreneurship development

within a framework of community and local participation to change lives and mainstream women.

## Lessons learned and how they will be applied

- Choosing councils more carefully and locking in their commitment for better results.
- Working with fewer councils at a time to facilitate links and sustainability of the project and the women's business aspirations.
- Choosing participants more carefully and supporting them holistically for the workshop period to maximise impact of the training.
- Strengthening links with potential support for the women in councils.
- Introducing of communities of business women and peer mentorship for learning, sharing and networking.
- Identifying potential sources of funding has been difficult and needs to be a focus issue with each new council and as a key issue in the post 2015 agenda for the economic mainstreaming of women in SADC.

### KEY INDICATORS

Indicator	Botswana	Lesotho	Madagascar	Mauritius	Mozambique	Namibia	South Africa	Swaziland	Zambia	Zimbabwe	Regional total or average
Survivor participation (in Phase 3)	109	130	154	105	220	128	81	140	133	150	1350
Completed a business plan	100%	99%	96%	81%	80%	95%	79%	81%	98%	98%	91%
Followed a business plan	56%	92%	90%	64%	72%	89%	54%	72%	87%	96%	79%
Average monthly income before the project (Rands)	94	237	495	75	11	105	-124	206	763	614	270
Average monthly income after the project (Rands)	502	593	951	434	13	611	532	350	1,983	1,731	796
Increase in average monthly income after training (Rands)	408	356	456	359	2	506	656	144	1,220	1,117	526
Overall increase in income over one year as a result of the project (Rands)	475,680	533,412	1,597,008	374,808	30,399	974,640	542,892	327,960	2,878,644	3,054,120	10,789,563
Personal agency at the start	74%	72%	81%	83%	76%	69%	74%	71%	76%	77%	76%
Personal agency after the project	79%	76%	84%	83%	73%	73%	77%	74%	77%	80%	78%
Increase or decrease in personal agency	5%	4%	3%	0	-3%	4%	3%	3%	1%	3%	2%
Relationship control at the start	70%	49%	65%	65%	69%	65%	65%	63%	50%	52%	62%
Relationship control after the project	82%	60%	70%	68%	73%	64%	65%	68%	60%	54%	66%
Increase or decrease in relationship control	12%	11%	5%	3%	4%	-1%	0	5%	10%	2%	4%
GBV less or much less	96%	93%	94%	92%	66%	81%	74%	86%	97%	91%	85%
Gender Progress Scores in community (baseline in brackets)	62% (61%)	73% (66%)	65% (65%)	57% (56%)	67% (56%)	60% (59%)	62% (65%)	64% (57%)	59% (61%)	61% (59%)	63% (61%)
Gender Progress Score of participants	75%	66%	73%	82%	64%	65%	72%	70%	71%	70%	70%
Contribution in kind from councils (Rands)	718,728	391,000	338,921	1,711,729	32	164,342	10,000	540,900	1,083,722	975,907	5,935,281
Rating of council support	44%	38%	70%	50%	70%	50%	38%	56%	52%	76%	54%
Overall rating of the project	92%	84%	87%	92%	95%	82%	84%	84%	89%	90%	89%

Source: Gender Links.

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