

# Empowering Women - Ending Violence in Lesotho



Mafumanang Sekonyela showing off her certificate after winning at the National Summit, Maseru Cabanas Lesotho. Credit: IEMS

**Mafumanang Sekonyela** from the rural area of Mapholaneng in the Mokhotlong district married at a young age to a teacher. They had a happy marriage until she fell sick. Her husband ill-treated her and left her all

by herself in the house despite her illness. One day her councillor visited her and told her about GL's entrepreneurship training. She decided to go and immediately felt at home despite not feeling well. She persevered with the course and produced a well thought through business plan that resulted in her attending the Lesotho National Gender Summit in Maseru in 2014. She won the national award and had to apply for a passport for the first time in her life to participate in the regional SADC Gender Protocol@Work Summit. During the summit, GL arranged a study visit to the Maponya Mall in Soweto. One of the businesses expressed interest in ordering the flowers that Mafumanang makes in her business. After the summit she rushed home excited about the new market opportunity. She got large orders and had to hire two women to help her. Sekonyela now goes to Johannesburg four times a year; an empowering experience. She has opened a bank account for the first time in her life; is able to pay for her kids school fees and takes care of her family.

## KEY FACTS

- 175 survivors of GBV in 10 councils trained as entrepreneurs.
- 99% completed a business plan and 92% followed through on the plan. 44% indicated starting a new business, 15% increased the size of their business and 32% opened a bank account.
- 93% indicated that the project gave them choices to reduce GBV and helped build their confidence.
- Gender attitudes as measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS) in the increased by seven percentage points

- from 66% to 73%: a positive development in these conservative communities. At 66% the participant's GPS is seven percentage points lower than their communities. This reflects the need for continuous backstopping.
- The average monthly income for participants increased by M487. The annual net income rose by 60% to M533 412.
- 93% said they are now experiencing less or much less GBV in their lives. The relationship control index, that measures power within intimate relationships rose by 11%.
- Overall rating of the project is 86% in Lesotho.

*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 show 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 staying in or returning to abusive relationships because they lacked economic independence

“Apart from being sensitised about my rights, my level of socialisation has changed. I say this because in the past I could not stand being in the company of my fellow community members because I felt as though they were talking about me or that I was the community laughing stock. I had always thought it best to isolate myself, however, now I enjoy socialising with members of my community”.

*Mathabo Mosese from the Mazenod Council*

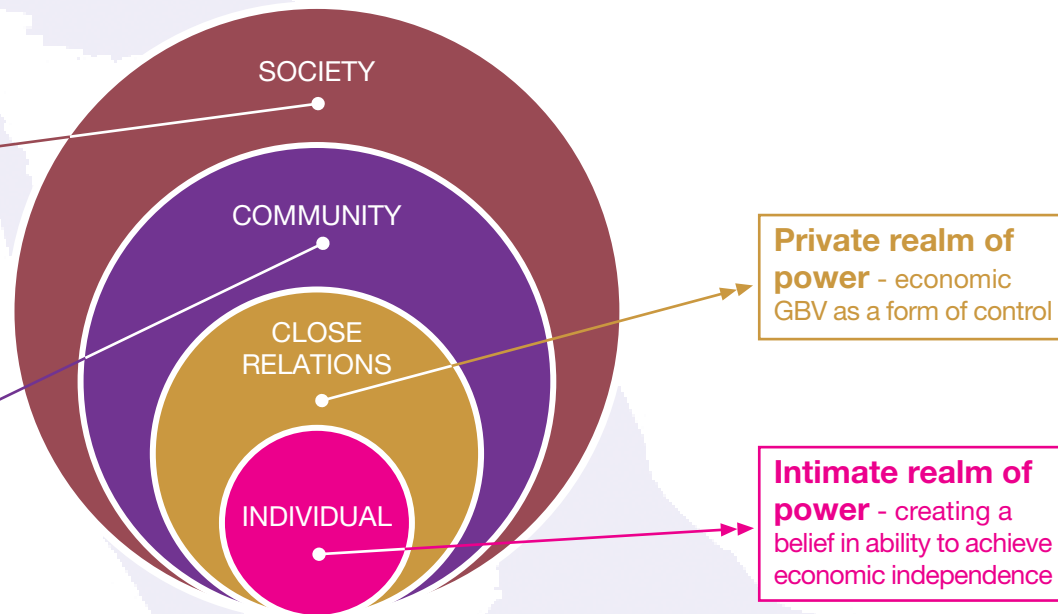
or experienced financial control as a form of abuse. GL set out to test the links between economic empowerment and ending GBV.

## What the project involved

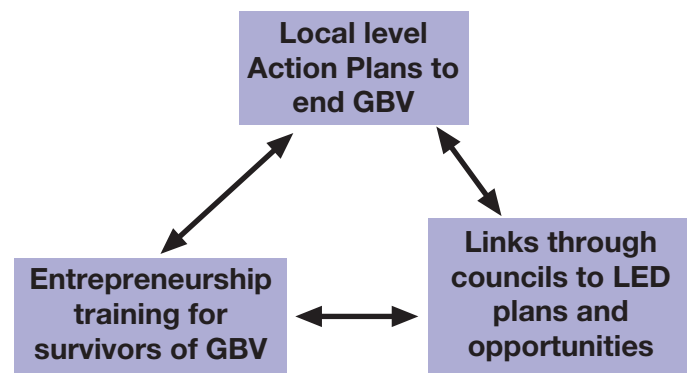
The programme focuses on an integrated approach of life skills and entrepreneurship training including confidence building; decision making, business management, use of IT, networking and addressing the underlying structural inequalities between men and men. Informed by the ecological theory of change, 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



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:

In some cases the emerging entrepreneurs have been able to **provide jobs** for others in their community. “I always baked bread in very small quantities before the GL training and kept the money in the house. Since going for the training, my business and sales have increased and I had to hire two people to assist me in making the bread. I have even opened two bank accounts and I no longer keep money in the house.”

*Maputsoane Leboea from Mohale's Hoek Urban Council*

For many, the programme has resulted in an **improvement in income and well-being**. “My children would be expelled from school and I was so bitter about my whole life because I could not understand why this was happening to me; I was suffering so much. All those things have now changed because I am now able to pay for my children's school fees and take care of them very well. There is a never a time that my children go to bed without eating. I used not

to have confidence and my neighbours would gossip about me when I was on my way to ask things from them. I hated my life so much, but now things have changed and my neighbours are the ones that borrow from me.”

*Tsepiso Mpofu from Botha Bothe Urban Council*



Tsepiso Mpofu and Matefo Ramarumo women entrepreneurs sewing hats with used plastics in Botha Bothe, Lesotho. Credit: Ntolo Lekau

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**. “Prior to the GL training I had tried different means of improving my livelihood but I was unsuccessful. The training showed me ways to start and grow a business and I have started a business that has changed my life. The business is doing very well and I am now able to make more money and this helps me to buy more stock. I have also increased the number of products I sell. The training helped me with business skills such as budgeting and record keeping and now I keep the records of my business. I even pay my own salary at the end of each month.”

*Mookho Taleng from Makoabating Council*

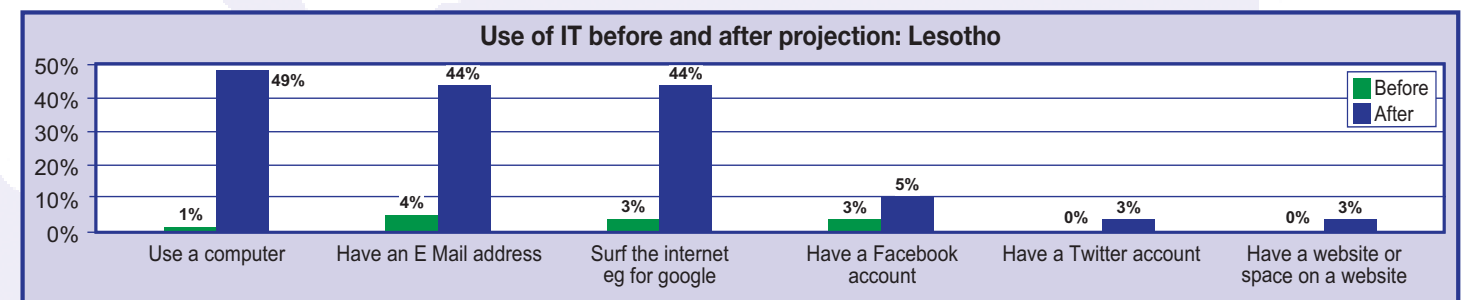
Many of the women have expressed having **more self-confidence** because they have learned more about GBV and running a business which has given them more status in their homes and the community. Lesotho scored the second highest increase for relationship control at 11%, higher than the regional increase of 4%. These are important indicators of the potential for increasing agency and reducing GBV. Personal agency rose by 4% (one percentage point higher than the regional average).

“I was abused at a very young age and this continued even into my marriage. I was angry with the whole world because I did not understand why my life was such a mess and why the people I love hurt me so much. After attending the GL training my life completely changed and that is reflected in the way I relate to the family and the community at large. My family has responded in a positive way and encourage me to keep up the good work and continually tell me that they are very proud of me. I have also affected the community because they come to me for advice as I now I hold meetings for women and men to discuss GBV issues. I am thinking of making these meetings more formal and holding them at least two per month.”

*Mamopeli Mohale from Mohale's Hoek Urban Council*

One of the main aims of the project was to increase survivor's personal agency and many have indicated positive changes in their relationships. “Before I attended the GL training I hated myself so much because I did not understand why my own husband was abusing me and I would even be very moody to my children, but now things are better. Now if there is anything that needs to be talked about we sit down together as a family, talk and make informed decisions. My husband is now working very hard to form men's forums where they will be discussing issues that affect women and how best men can treat their partners and families.”

*Makananelo Rapuleng from Ntsupe Council*



Source: Gender Links.

The programme brought about a sea change in IT skills. As illustrated in the graph, 49% women now use a computer compared to 1% at the start of the project. 44% have access to E Mail (compared to 4% at the start). 44% surf the internet (compared to 3% at the start). 3% now have a website or space on a website, compared to 0% at the start.

The programme has helped Centres of Excellence for Gender in local government to **put their gender action plans to work**. Even though it is still a challenge to finance those women or even for the council to get financial support, Mazenod council councillors are working very hard to secure meetings with different business people so that



Women entrepreneurs during IT training in Seate council. Credit: Ntolo Lekau

they can find the financial supports for the women. Cllr Mamatsepe Ramakhula, the chairperson of the council confirms that the council even had several meetings with a few private organisations to come up with plan on how they can work with them one on several issues. Cllr Ramakhula mentioned that they even conducted Vodacom Lesotho as to find out if they can train the women on business skills and also assist on start-up capital. Case study of the Mazenod Council written up by Ntolo Lekau of Gender Links.

Gender Links measures **progress in gender attitudes in communities**. Gender attitudes as measured by the Gender Progress Score (GPS) in the increased by seven percentage points from 66% to 73%: a positive development in these conservative communities. The Botha Bothe urban council is an example of a council that working hard to support entrepreneurs so that they can access council procurement or sub-contracts. They encouraged women to register one company for all of them so that they can access procurement possibilities by complying and having all the necessary documents for them to qualify. The Assistant Administrative Officer, Likenkeng Ntisa said that the programme has changed their council, councillors and staff. She said the

programme is very important and they are glad that the council is part of it because it has brought change in the lives of participants as well as community members.

## 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	1,350
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 (Maloti)	94	237	495	75	11	105	-124	206	763	614	270
Average monthly income after the project (Maloti)	502	593	951	434	13	611	532	350	1983	1731	796
Increase in average monthly income after training (Maloti)	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 (Maloti)	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 (Maloti)	718,728	391,000	338,921	171,1729	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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