

Genderworks
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2025
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ANNUAL REPORT



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WHO WE ARE



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Message from our Board Chair

This year has reminded us, again, why Genderworks exists. Across our country, the realities of gender-based harm, silence, and disconnection continue to shape how people live, relate, and see themselves. Yet within these same spaces, we have witnessed something powerful. People choosing to sit together. To listen. To speak truth. To begin again.

Genderworks continues to hold spaces where these moments can unfold. Spaces where individuals and communities are able to engage with difficult conversations around gender, identity, power, and healing, in ways that are respectful, contained, and deeply human.

Over the past year, our facilitators have worked across diverse communities, creating environments where dialogue becomes possible and where understanding begins to shift how people see themselves and one another. Through programmes such as Human Sexuality and Alternatives to Violence, along with our broader programme offering, we have reached individuals who may never have had access to safe, guided spaces for reflection and growth. These engagements ask something real of every person in the room, and in return, they open the door to awareness, accountability, and change.

Alongside this work, the organisation took important steps to strengthen its foundation. For the first time in recent years, we have adopted a focused two-year strategic approach to growth and sustainability. This is guided by four key pillars, each supported by dedicated committees working alongside our volunteers, facilitators, management, and board.

We have also seen a renewed strengthening of our leadership structures, including the appointment of new members to the management team and a clearer refinement of the board's role in supporting the organisation's direction and accountability.

Two years ago, when the current board stepped in, Genderworks navigated a period of uncertainty. Today, there is a palpable shift. We recently graduated a group of Gender Equity and Reconciliation Institute (GERI) facilitators, bringing fresh energy, perspective, and commitment into the work. With these new hands, hearts, and minds, the organisation is building steady momentum.

This work would not be possible without the dedication of our facilitators, who hold these spaces with care, skill, and integrity. We are equally grateful to our partners and funders who continue to support the organisation, and to the communities who trust us enough to engage in this work.

As we look ahead, our focus remains clear. We will continue to deepen our reach, strengthen our facilitator network, and expand the spaces where dialogue, healing, and understanding can take place.

We move forward with humility, with intention, and with a deep respect for the people we serve.

Rayhana Erasmus

Rayhana Sait-Erasmus
Board Chair
Genderworks



Management Committee Chair Report

The work of Gender Equity and Reconciliation has always demanded more than technical competence. It demands a particular quality of inner resolve, the capacity to remain convinced of the possibility of a more just and healed world even when the conditions surrounding that work are difficult, and the resources to sustain it are scarce. The armour of this work is truth. Its medicine is love. And in 2025, as the world outside grew more fractured and South Africa's crisis of gender-based violence deepened, it was to those two things that Genderworks returned again and again.

Staying motivated in a season of constrained capacity and limited resources takes its toll. That must be named honestly. Our team of volunteer programme leads carried significant responsibility through the year, and the weight of that commitment was real. Monthly management meetings could not all take place as planned. The organisation's focus shifted, necessarily and deliberately, from the full scope of management activity toward ensuring that minimum statutory requirements and compliance standards were met, and that ongoing programme work was supported with consistency and care. Five Leadership Team meetings were held across the year, in February, April, May, July, and August, alongside the Annual General Meeting on 11 December 2025. It was not the rhythm we had intended. But it was the rhythm the season required, and the team held it with integrity.

The AGM brought with it an important milestone; the presentation and approval of Audited Financial Statements, and a commitment to transparency and accountability that reflects Genderworks' conviction that good governance is not bureaucracy. It is the foundation on which trust is built.

The governance journey of 2025 has roots in a deliberate transition that began at the AGM on 18 June 2024, themed **Transitions**. At that gathering, an Induction Board was appointed for a one-year term to usher the organisation through a period of structural renewal, one that called for a clearer separation of duties, stronger oversight, more robust financial management, and a sharper delegation of authority. Board members Rayhana Erasmus, Hennie Pienaar (resigned in 2024), Christelle September, Craig Carter, and Matome Kganakga invested time in genuinely understanding the organisation's vision, culture, and landscape. In August 2025, one of the board members facilitated a head-and-heart storm session. A space to imagine boldly what Genderworks could become in an increasingly competitive and under-resourced civil society sector. That session planted seeds that would grow into the Revitalisation and Renewal strategy adopted at the December AGM.

At that same meeting, the Board's term was extended to maintain the continuity and stability the transition demanded. Genderworks does not move through renewal lightly. It moves through it with care, with honesty, and with a radical hope that refuses to be extinguished.

Desiree English

Desiree English
Management Committee Chair
Genderworks



About Genderworks

Gender is not one issue among many. It is a fault line that runs beneath every dimension of social life. It shapes who holds power and who absorbs harm. It determines, in ways both visible and invisible, who is believed, who is protected, and who is left to manage the consequences of other people's unchecked behaviour. Across all races, classes, religions, and sexual orientations, women and men and people of all gender identities contend daily with the weight of what they have been taught to be.

And it is in the intimate, everyday enactments of that conditioning, the micro-aggressions, the silences, the small violences that are normalised as just the way things are, that the conditions for larger-scale harm are laid. What happens behind closed doors does not stay there. It seeps outward, into communities, into culture, into a collective tolerance for gender-based violence that we should never have allowed to become ordinary.

Genderworks exists because sustainable peace requires the transformation of gender relations. That is not a peripheral conviction. It is the foundation on which everything we do is built.

GENDER EQUITY AND RECONCILIATION

Gender Equity and Reconciliation is a transformative methodology developed by Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI) and implemented by Genderworks, a southern Africa-based non-governmental organisation. At its core, the methodology brings together women and men, and people across the full spectrum of gender identity, in a carefully held forum designed to confront and transform the roots of gender and sexual injustice.

The methodology is experiential and reflective. It builds trust through compassionate communication, and it holds space for the kind of honesty that most social environments, including many activist ones, do not actually make room for. It operates within the tradition of transitional justice and truth and reconciliation, applying those principles not to the political history of a nation but to the intimate history of gender. The methodology was explicitly endorsed by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in 2013, an endorsement that speaks to the depth of alignment between this work and the reconciliation tradition that helped transform South Africa's most defining historical rupture.

THE SPECIFIC WEIGHT OF THIS COUNTRY

To do this work in South Africa is to do it in one of the most complex and harrowing gender landscapes in the world. South Africa's three hundred and fifty years of slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and apartheid did not merely produce economic inequality. They produced a social order saturated with violence, including gender-based violence, and embedded that violence in the cultural fabric of masculinity itself.

The prevalence of rape in South Africa is among the highest in the world. That fact is not incidental to the country's history. It is a direct consequence of it. Scholar Thokozani Xaba has written about a form of "compensatory manhood" that has emerged in the post-apartheid context, describing the way in which men - *stripped of dignity and agency by centuries of colonial and apartheid oppression* - have sometimes sought to rebuild a sense of masculine power through criminality and violence against women. This is not an excuse. It is an explanation, and understanding it is essential to challenging it.

Men in South Africa are not only perpetrators of harm. They are also shaped and constrained and wounded by the same patriarchal system. Mainstream masculinity demands emotional suppression, physical toughness, and a performance of strength that leaves very little room for the full experience of being human. That demand produces suffering. It produces men who cannot access their grief, their fear, or their need for connection except through distorted and damaging expressions. It produces a world in which most male violence is committed not against women but against other men.

This is the terrain we are working in. And it is precisely because of that terrain that the Gender Equity and Reconciliation methodology has such urgent relevance here.

WHERE WE WORK AND WHO WE WORK WITH

In South Africa, Genderworks conducts workshops and facilitation training programmes across four broad arenas: peacebuilding and reconciliation; community development; faith leaders and communities; and universities and tertiary education. We also hold workshops open to the general public, because the need for this kind of space does not belong to any single sector.

Our participants include religious and inter-faith communities, peacebuilding NGOs such as the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, local community members, youth sector, university students and staff, prison inmates, social justice groups, therapeutic networks, and Members of Parliament. Our facilitators come from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, because the work requires facilitators who can meet participants in the complexity of their particular context, not as outsiders looking in.

The breadth of this reach is not accidental. It reflects a conviction that gender injustice is not a niche concern. It is everyone's inheritance, and the work of transformation belongs to everyone.

CHANGES WHEN PEOPLE GO THROUGH THIS PROCESS

The evidence of impact is not abstract. It lives in the testimonies of participants who describe their lives as genuinely different on the other side of this process. Men report taking responsibility for curbing their own gender-based violence and that of those around them. Women report undergoing healing from gender-based violence and trauma: not the erasure of what happened, but a different relationship to it, one that allows them to carry their experience without being collapsed by it. Participants describe speaking up about gender injustice in workplaces, in public spaces, and in communities in ways they could not before, because the workshop gave them both the language and the courage.

Initial findings from research by the University of Free State confirm what participants have long been telling us: the GERI methodology has a powerful and sustained impact on young women and men. It transforms hegemonic masculinities. It shifts the underlying gender ideologies that shape how women and men relate to each other and to themselves. Research also points to the methodology's potential contribution to reducing HIV/AIDS transmission - a connection that makes sense when we understand that violence against women is one of the primary drivers of the epidemic.

We do not claim to have solved gender injustice. We claim something more modest and more durable. When people are offered the right conditions for honest encounter, something shifts. And what shifts in a person ripples outward into their relationships, their communities, and the small daily choices that, when accumulated across enough lives, constitute the slow turning of a world toward something better.

Our Board



CHAIR:
RAYHANA ERASMUS



DEPUTY CHAIR:
CRAIG CARTER



MEMBER:
MATOME KGANAKGA



MEMBER:
CHRISTELLE SEPTEMBER

Our Management



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
CHAIR: DESIREE ENGLISH



DEPUTY CHAIR & HUMAN
SEXUALITY: LAURIE GAUM



TREASURER:
EMMA OLIVER



LGBTQIA LEAD:
TRISTAN JOHANNES



ALTERNATIVES TO
VIOLENCE PROJECT:
XOLILE PRO ZULANI



ALTERNATIVES TO
VIOLENCE PROJECT AND
IMBADU MENS PROJECT:
LESLEY THOMAS



WHAT WE DID

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The Full Shape of a Year's Work

Every item in the tables below represents a decision to show up by facilitators who gave their time, by participants who chose to be honest, and by an organisation that refused to let reduced resources become a reason to reduce its reach.

Across 2025, Genderworks programme moved between the intimate and the expansive. It delivered multi-day immersions that asked participants to go deep, community taster sessions that offered a first point of contact, and online connection calls that held the facilitation community together between in-person gatherings.

The backbone of the year was the four-module GERI Immersion and Facilitator Training programme, which ran from February through to December. This is not a short course. It is a sustained, progressive journey through the methodology which is experiential, reflective, and demanding in the best sense. Each module built on the last, with online connection calls in May, June, and September serving as the connective tissue between residential intensives, holding trainees in relationship with each other and with the material as their practice deepened. The cohort that crossed the graduation threshold in December carried something hard-won: not just a certification, but a lived understanding of what this work requires of the person doing it.

Alongside the training arc, Genderworks extended its reach into two community-facing moments. The GERI Taster at the Kirstenhof Community Business Network in March brought the methodology into a professional networking context. It was a reminder that gender conditioning does not stay neatly in the spaces we designate for it, and that workplaces and business communities are as much in need of this kind of encounter as any other. The GERI Taster at the Global Compassion Coalition Festival in September placed Genderworks within a broader ecosystem of organisations working toward a more humane world. This was an important act of solidarity and visibility.

The three-day **Healing the Divide** workshop in September was, in many ways, the year's centrepiece public offering. Three days is enough time for something real to happen, enough time for defences to soften, for stories to be told, and for the kind of witnessing that changes both the person speaking and the person listening. The follow-up connection call in November for that same cohort honoured what had begun in the workshop room, holding space for participants to return to the experience with some distance, and to share how the work had continued to move in them.

Table 1: Genderworks Programmes and Activities 2025

NO.	EVENT	FORMAT	DATE
1	GERI Immersion and Facilitator Training Module 1	In-person	23 – 28 February
2	GERI Taster – Kirstenhof Community Business Network	In-person	27 March
3	LGBTQ Global Course	Online	3 May - 14 June
4	SA GERI Facilitator Trainees Connection Call	Online	13 May 2025
5	Human Sexuality Workshop	In-person	17 - 18 May
6	SA GERI Facilitator Trainees Connection Call	Online	10 June 2025
7	GERI Immersion and Facilitator Training Module 2	In-person	22 – 27 June 2025
8	LGBTQ GERI Workshop: North West University.	In-person	9 - 11 July
9	SA GERI Facilitator Trainees Connection Call	Online	08 September 2025
10	GERI Taster at the Global Compassion Coalition Festival	In-person	11 September 2025
11	GERI 3-day “Healing the Divide” Workshop	In-person	15 – 17 September 2025

NO.	EVENT	FORMAT	DATE
12	LGBTQIA+ Taster for Eastern Cape Activists	Online	25 September
13	GERI Immersion and Facilitator Training Module 3	In-person	12 – 17 October 2025
14	Follow-Up Connection Call (Workshop on 15–17 September)	Online	03 November 2025
15	GERI Immersion and Facilitator Training Module 4 and Graduation	In-person	07 – 12 December 2025

PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE: THE CHRYSALIS ACADEMY

Some of the most significant work an organisation does is not work it does alone. Genderworks’ partnership with the Chrysalis Academy is a demonstration of what becomes possible when two institutions, each rooted in a commitment to human dignity and transformation, find the place where their missions converge.

Underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding between Chrysalis and Satyana Institute’s GERI Programme, Genderworks actively supports the implementation of the Chrysalis Academy’s GERI strategy to bring the Gender Equity and Reconciliation methodology into a context that works with young people whose lives have often been shaped by exactly the conditions that GERI is designed to address and transform. The programmes delivered within this partnership during 2025 are detailed in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Genderworks Partnership Programmes and Activities 2025

NO.	EVENT	DATE
1	Charlie Father and Sons	15 March
2	Alpha Father and Sons	11 July
3	BRAVO Mother and Daughters	7 November

GLOBAL REACH AND THE FACILITATION TRAINING JOURNEY

There is something significant about the fact that five Senior GERI Facilitators and Trainers live in South Africa. In a methodology that was developed internationally and is practised across the world, having that depth of skill, experience, and commitment present on this continent, in this country, with its particular and urgent need for gender healing, is not incidental. It is a resource of the highest order.

Desirée English, who serves as GERI Director of Training, alongside Senior Facilitators and Trainers Dr Lucille Meyer, Tristan Johannes, Laurie Gaum, and Antonia Porter, form the experienced core around which Genderworks’ facilitation community is held. Their collective presence means that the cohort of facilitators, interns, participants, and friends of the GERI work in South Africa are accompanied by hands and hearts that are skilled, compassionate, and genuinely diverse in background, in experience, and in the particular textures of wisdom each of them brings.

But their contribution does not stop at our borders. Genderworks’ senior team extends the reach of this work globally, collaborating with the founders of the GERI methodology and with facilitators and trainers across the world to bring Gender Equity and Reconciliation into new contexts and communities. They contribute to in-person and online workshops, international events, conferences, and panels, widening the circle of what this reconciliation and healing work can touch. They offer ongoing mentorship and professional development support to certified facilitators and interns, understanding that the quality of this work depends on the ongoing formation of the people who hold it. And they lead introductory conversations with individuals, organisations, and institutions who are encountering GERI for the first time, planting seeds that the expansion strategy depends on to take root.

Table 3 reflects some of the international contributions our senior team made in 2025.

Table 3: International Events and Contributions - SA GERI Senior Team 2025

NO.	EVENT	SA GERI FACILITATOR / TRAINER	DATE
1	GERI Workshop - Canticle Farm, Oakland, California, USA	Tristan Johannes	28 February - 02 March
2	Father Thomas Keating Symposium, A Rising Tide of Oneness - Garrison Institute, New York, USA	Tristan Johannes (Panelist)	01 March
3	69th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW-69) NGO Forum - New York, USA	Tristan Johannes	13 March
4	Intro GERI Workshop - Unity Church, Houston, Texas, USA	Tristan Johannes	16 March
5	GERI Workshop - Barcelona, Spain	Antonia Porter	9 - 11 May
6	GERI Workshop - Dream a Dream, Bangalore, India	Desireé English	25 - 27 November
7	Host, Present or Facilitate at Second Saturday Circles	Desireé English Dr Lucille Meyer Tristan Johannes	Second Saturday of each month
8	GERI Global Facilitator Connection Calls	Desireé English Dr Lucille Meyer Tristan Johannes	As scheduled

What the table conveys in dates and destinations, the context around it makes more vivid. Tristan Johannes carried the work to the United States in the early months of the year, from a workshop at Canticle Farm in Oakland, rooted in the contemplative activist tradition, to the stage of the Father Thomas Keating Symposium in New York, where he joined a panel under the theme **A Rising Tide of Oneness**. Days later, he represented Genderworks at the 69th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum, one of the world’s most significant multilateral spaces for gender advocacy, before facilitating an introductory GERI workshop at Unity Church in Houston. That arc, from Oakland to the United Nations to a church in Texas in the space of two weeks, speaks to the range of contexts this methodology can inhabit and the credibility Genderworks’ senior facilitators carry in each of them.

Later in the year, Desireé English travelled to Bangalore to facilitate a GERI workshop with Dream a Dream, an Indian organisation working with young people who have experienced adversity, extending the methodology’s reach into a context shaped by its own complex histories of gender, caste, and power. That the work translates across such different cultural settings is not something we take for granted. It is a testament to the depth and rigour of the methodology, and to the skill of the facilitators who carry it.

Throughout the year, the Second Saturday Circles continued their quiet, consistent work, monthly online gatherings that hold the global GERI community in connection, reflection, and ongoing formation. Desireé English, Dr Lucille Meyer, and Tristan Johannes rotate through hosting and facilitating these circles, which function as a kind of heartbeat for the wider network. Similarly, the Global Facilitator Connection Calls keep the international facilitation community in dialogue, ensuring that what is being learned in one part of the world can nourish the work being done in another.

THE YEAR’S DEEPEST INVESTMENT: THE IMMERSION AND FACILITATION TRAINING PROGRAMME

If any single thread of 2025 deserves to be held up and examined in the light, it is the year-long GERI Immersion and Facilitation Training Programme. Beginning in February and culminating in graduation in December, this programme was not a training in the conventional sense. It was a formation process, one that asked participants to bring not only their minds but their whole selves into the work of becoming facilitators of gender healing and reconciliation.

The programme unfolded across four modules, each building on the last, with online connection calls and peer engagement woven between the residential intensives to sustain the community and the learning between gatherings. What graduated in December was not simply a group of newly certified facilitators. It was a cohort - a community of people who had gone through something together, who had been honest with each other in ways that are rare, who had wrestled with the material and with themselves, and who emerged from that process more equipped, more grounded, and more deeply committed to the work.

We are proud to call them love warriors. That is not a sentimental label. It is an accurate one.



Module 1: 23 - 28 February 2025
This module is designed to create a safe forum to support trainees in diving deep and unpacking their experiences in relation to gender and sexuality.



Module 2: 22 - 27 June 2025
Spirituality and sexuality are intrinsic to us. In this module, we created a safe space to gently explore this beautiful, intimate inner landscape, our birthright to discover and befriend.



Module 3: 12 - 17 October 2025
Trainees gained hands-on facilitation experience with their peers, work together in role-plays, and hone their skills in responding to challenging and sometimes volatile gender situations.



Module 4: 07 - 12 December 2025
The focus here was on teaching and experiential components related to ethics, unique challenges of gender-related facilitation and other challenges. This was also when trainees graduated.

Healing the Divide

WHERE SOMETHING REAL COULD HAPPEN

Some workshops inform, and there are workshops that transform. The three-day Healing the Divide GERI workshop, held in September at the Chrysalis Academy in Cape Town, was unmistakably the latter. Twenty-six participants arrived carrying their own histories, their own experiences of gender, culture, faith, violence, and resilience, and what unfolded over those three days was not the delivery of a curriculum but the unfolding of something that can only happen when people are held in a space skilled enough, and safe enough, to allow it.

The facilitators carried that space with the quality of care this work demands. Attentive, unhurried, and deeply present. What they created was not comfort in the easy sense, but the harder, more generative comfort of being genuinely held. The assurance that whatever arose could be met, and that the people in the room were capable of more honesty, more courage, and more tenderness than they had perhaps expected of themselves or of each other.

WHAT PEOPLE BROUGHT, AND WHAT THEY FOUND

The group that gathered for Healing the Divide was strikingly diverse in nationality, in background, in the specific textures of what each person had lived. That diversity was not incidental to the workshop's impact. It was central to it. When a room holds people whose stories have been shaped by such different geographies of power and pain, the truth-telling that occurs is not only personal. It becomes a kind of mapping, a collective act of naming what gender injustice looks like across cultures, across contexts, and across the full range of human experience.

One participant, a researcher whose life took him from China to South Africa, captured something of the workshop's depth in his reflection:

"Three transformative days at the GERI training at the Chrysalis Academy, Cape Town. I learned deeply about trauma, healing, and the profound power of truth-telling and deep listening. The stories shared were incredibly powerful - personal testimonies that revealed immense strength and resilience. It was challenging, humbling, and a true honour to be invited into spaces of compassionate listening and to share my own journey growing up in China's rushed modernisation under the One-Child Policy."

What he names here, the honour of being invited into another person's story, alongside the courage of offering your own, is precisely the exchange that GERI is designed to make possible. His story, shaped by the singular pressures of a particular political and cultural moment in Chinese history, sat alongside stories shaped by apartheid, by township life, by religious communities, by intimate violence, and by the daily negotiations of gender in bodies and relationships across the world. None of these stories cancelled each other out. Together, they illuminated something that no single story could have revealed alone.

He continued: *"I pledged to always stand against violence, both the visible and the invisible forms that shape lives and communities. The facilitators were skilful and held the space with care, respect, and wisdom. Grateful for the experience and for the people who made it possible, I carry these lessons forward in my research, practice, and everyday commitments to truth and wisdom. May our practice and collective actions create a more just and peaceful world."*

The closing council speaks to something the GERI process reliably produces in people who go through it with openness: not just new knowledge, but a renewed sense of personal responsibility. A deepened understanding that the more just and peaceful world we are working toward is not something that will arrive from outside, but something that each of us is building, or failing to build, in every choice we make.

WHEN THE WORK NEEDED TO BREATHE

Not everything that happened in those three days was weighty. Some of it was joyful. And that joy was not a relief from the work but an expression of it.

After the second truth forum, the group came together in one of those spontaneous, irreplaceable moments that no facilitator can plan but every good facilitator creates the conditions for. They sang. They took a familiar song and changed the words, making it their own: *"I love you, you love me, this is the way to be."* It was light. It was fun. It was also, in the way that shared laughter after shared vulnerability always is, a form of integration. A way of allowing the body and the spirit to absorb what the mind had just been asked to hold. In a workshop that asks so much of its participants, moments like this are not breaks from the process. They are part of it.

MEN HONOURING WOMEN

The ceremony in which the men of the group honoured the women was a moment of unexpected beauty, rooted in the particular diversity of the people in the room.

It began with a greeting. Each man stepped forward and greeted the women in his own language, a gesture that brought the group's many nationalities not just into acknowledgement but into the centre of the ritual. Language carries culture, history, and belonging, and in that moment, the diversity of the group became not a challenge to navigate but a gift to offer. The room held the sound of multiple worlds, each man speaking from the place in himself that preceded whatever else he had become.

The men then spoke their commitments, individual and collective, and together they wrote a poem, composed in the spirit of the work they did, and offered it to the women as an act of witness and intention. The ceremony closed with an invitation to celebrate together, the women joining the men in dance as Whitney Houston's *I Am Every Woman* filled the room. It was not a performance. It was a declaration - joyful, embodied, and entirely earned by everything that had come before it.

WOMEN HONOURING MEN

The ceremony that the women offered the men in return was of a different quality. It was quieter, more ceremonial in its rhythm, and profoundly moving.

As the men were welcomed and guided to their seats, the women assembled at the front of the room with their faces covered by scarves. The room held its breath. Then, at the sound of a bell, a sound that would mark every transition in the ceremony, each ring carrying the group deeper into what was being offered, the women lifted their scarves and looked at the men. Into the silence, they spoke three words: *I see you.*

For men who spent their lives performing, managing, and concealing, for whom being truly seen is often the thing most longed for and most feared, those three words landed with a weight that was entirely disproportionate to their simplicity. Several men were visibly moved. The seeing was the gift, before any other gift had been given.

The women then moved around to stand behind the men, asking each one's permission before placing a shawl across his shoulders. The gesture was tender and deliberate. *We got you. We have your back. Feel safe. Feel protected.* In a workshop that spent three days exploring the ways in which men and women harmed each other, and been harmed, this act of care across that divide carried an extraordinary weight.

The women then moved to the front to offer each man a gift with personal words. Words chosen specifically for him, reflecting what she had witnessed and received from him over the three days. And then, together, the commitments: each woman stepping forward to name what she was carrying forward into her life from this room.

Throughout the ceremony, there was the bell. Each ring marked a transition, deepening the ceremony's gravity, calling the room back to presence. It was, as one of those present described it, almost unbearably poignant. The sound of something being taken to the heart.

WHAT THIS WORK IS BUILDING

Healing the Divide is not simply a workshop title. It is a description of what happens, slowly and imperfectly and irreversibly, when men and women are given the conditions to encounter each other honestly. The divide being healed in that room over those three September days was not only the divide between individuals. It was the inherited divide of centuries, the accumulated distance between men and women produced by systems that have required them to see each other as threats, as mysteries, as burdens, or as tools, rather than as full human beings with stories that deserve to be heard.

Twenty-six people left the Chrysalis Academy carrying something they did not have when they arrived. Some of them carried it into research, into practice, into families and communities. Some of them carried it into the next conversation with their partner, their child, or their colleague. All of them carried it somewhere.



REFLECTIONS FROM A FEW PARTICIPANTS

"This is the kind of training that has to be introduced to schools and universities."
"GERI made me vulnerable to show up authentic and trust my feelings. I have the courage to speak out about how I feel."
"The way the facilitators invite you is not forced. By giving me an opportunity, they built trust within me."
"The fact that you are invited to share makes you as a person feel respected and honoured."
"My heart is open through the GERI programme."
"I am in touch with my feelings and no longer see my vulnerability as a weakness but a strength."

Alternatives to Violence Project

MEETING PEOPLE WHERE VIOLENCE LIVES

Violence does not announce itself. It accumulates in communities where resources are scarce and frustration runs deep, in schools where young people have absorbed more harm than they have been given tools to process, in homes where anger has never been taught a language other than force. The Alternatives to Violence Project exists to interrupt that accumulation, one workshop at a time, by offering something that sounds simple and is anything but, a safe space in which people can discover, often for the first time, that conflict does not have to end in destruction.

Throughout 2025, AVP workshops were facilitated across a twelve-month programme by lead facilitators Lesley and Xolile Pro, supported by Mariam, Angeline, Lizelle, and Aurelia; a facilitation team whose collective presence brought both skill and genuine warmth to some of the most challenging community contexts in the Western Cape. The groups they worked with reflected the full breadth of where gender-based violence, gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse, robbery, and bullying take root: youth at risk, church leaders, teachers, ex-prisoners, and the broader community. Workshops were delivered in night shelters and drug rehabilitation centres, at secondary schools including Windermere High, Kensington High, and a Muslim primary school, and in the communities of Mitchells Plain, Kensington, Factreton, and Khayelitsha. Follow-up workshops were conducted after every Basic and Advanced session because the team understands that transformation does not consolidate in a weekend, and that returning to a community sends a message that the relationship is real.

HOW THE WORK IS STRUCTURED

The AVP methodology is, at its core, experiential. It does not lecture people about conflict resolution. It invites them into it through exercises, role play, and group process that allow participants to feel the difference between destructive and constructive responses to tension, rather than simply being told about it. The workshops are, deliberately and importantly, also fun. That is not a concession to entertainment. It is an adult education choice. When people feel safe enough to play, their defences lower, and learning that might otherwise be resisted finds its way in.

The Basic Workshop forms the foundation of the programme. Its primary focus is community building to create conditions of trust and safety within which participants can speak freely and be genuinely heard. Deep listening is introduced not as a therapeutic concept but as a practical conflict-prevention skill. Participants develop the capacity to communicate differently when they find themselves in the grip of conflict, and they practice that capacity through role play, working through real scenarios with the tools the workshop has given them and discovering, with some surprise, that resolution is possible.

The Advanced Workshop builds on that foundation by moving into the specific challenges a community is facing. Participants themselves choose the focus theme through consensus, a process that is itself a practice in the skills being taught. In 2025, the themes chosen across Advanced Workshops included anger, forgiveness, community building, relationships, power, and communication. That these are the themes communities chose speaks to what they are living with. That they are willing to explore them together speaks to something resilient in the human desire to live differently.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID WHEN IT WAS OVER

The most honest account of what the AVP workshops achieved in 2025 is not found in facilitation notes or attendance registers. It is found in the words of the people who sat in those circles.

Janet named the value of teamwork, *“a recognition that the problems her community faces are not hers alone to carry”*. Shaun articulated something quietly profound, *“that listening to understand, rather than to respond, can prevent conflict before it ignites”*. Thando connected communication to the possibility of change, and Mandy offered two reflections that deserve to be held together, *“that respecting others is the foundation of good relationships, and that people are not bad, only their actions”*. That second insight is one that takes real generosity to arrive at, especially in communities where the consequences of other people’s actions have been devastating.

Sakhele returned to teamwork. Sipho named anger, not as something shameful, but as something that, when controlled, becomes a tool for resolution rather than destruction. Sakkie spoke about the power of the *“I Message,”* a communication technique that shifts the register of conflict from accusation to expression. And Peter offered the principle that underpins the entire AVP approach: *“always look for alternative ways to resolve conflict. Not because conflict is avoidable, but because the way through it can be chosen”*.

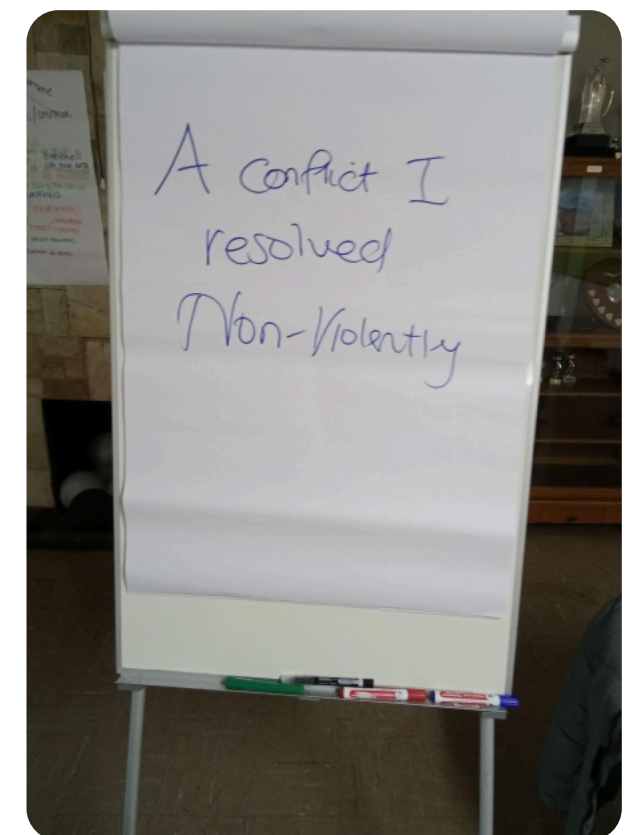
A RELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMED

Among the stories that emerged from the 2025 programme, one speaks with particular clarity to the reach of this work beyond the workshop room.

A participant shared that before attending the AVP workshop, her response to her daughter’s mistakes was to shout; a pattern she had perhaps never questioned because it was the only pattern she had been shown. In the workshop, she encountered a different way of communicating. She took that way home. The relationship between mother and daughter changed. It became, by her own account, better.

That story will not appear in any national statistic on gender-based violence. It will not be cited in a policy document or measured in an impact evaluation. But it is real, and it matters because a daughter who grows up in a home where conflict is handled with communication instead of screaming will carry that experience into her own relationships, and into the communities she inhabits, for the rest of her life.

That is the long work. And it is worth every workshop.





Imbadu Men's Project

THE WEIGHT MEN ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO CARRY

There is a particular kind of loneliness that belongs to men who have been taught that silence is strength. It is the loneliness of carrying pain that has no permitted outlet, of navigating grief, shame, and conflict without language, without witness, and without the relief of being truly known by another person. In communities where violence is not an abstraction but a daily reality, where it is modelled, inherited, and in some cases inescapable, that loneliness does not simply diminish men. It can consume them, and in its consuming, it reaches outward and harms the people around them too.

The Imbadu Men's Project was built in direct response to that reality. Its name carries weight. Its purpose is simple, and it is not simple at all: to create a space safe enough for men to become vulnerable, to speak freely about their pain and struggles, and to discover, often for the first time, that doing so is not weakness but an act of profound courage.

WHO CAME, AND WHERE

Throughout 2025, Imbadu workshops were facilitated by Lesley Thomas and Arthur Rengu across two reporting periods, reaching men and young boys in some of the most high-violence communities and institutional contexts in the Western Cape.

From March to June, workshops were held at the Factreton drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre with twelve men; at Mandela Park Youth Centre in Khayelitsha with fifteen boys; at The Ark Refuge Centre with twelve men; at De Noon Youth Centre with twelve men; at Centre of Hope with ten men; and at a Khayelitsha rehabilitation centre with thirteen boys. In the period from July to November, the programme extended further, returning to the Centre of Hope in Parow, a shelter for homeless men, with eleven participants; back to Mandala Park Youth Centre with fifteen boys; to The Ark Refuge Centre with twelve men on two occasions; to De Noon Youth Centre with fifteen men; to the Khayelitsha Rehabilitation Centre with thirteen boys; and into Pollsmoor Prison, where the workshops were held with ten inmates and three prison wardens.

That last setting deserves particular acknowledgement. Pollsmoor Prison is not an easy place to do this work. It is a place where the consequences of unaddressed pain, unprocessed trauma, and conditioned violence are most visibly concentrated. That Imbadu was welcomed there, that prison wardens sat alongside inmates in a circle and allowed themselves to be changed by it, is a testament to the methodology, and to the facilitators who carried it in.

WHAT THE WORKSHOPS HOLD

Each Imbadu workshop moves through a set of themes that together form a map of the inner life that men in our society are rarely invited to explore. Gender biography invites participants to trace the story of how they came to understand what it means to be a man; the messages, the models, the moments that shaped them. From there, the workshops move into the territory of how men relate to other men, and how they relate to women. Two relational landscapes that carry enormous complexity and, for many participants, significant unresolved pain.

The mother wound and the father wound are addressed with care. These are not easy conversations. For many men in the communities Imbadu serves, the relationship with one or both parents is marked by absence, harm, or a love that was present but had no healthy form of expression. Naming that, in the company of other men who recognise the same wound in themselves, can be quietly seismic.

The workshops also hold space for faith journeys, for the exploration of conflict and how to navigate it differently, for the practice of mentoring (both receiving it and offering it) and for affirmation. That last element may be the most countercultural of all: men affirming one another, without irony, without deflection, without the armour that so many have worn for so long they have forgotten it is there.

WHAT THE MEN SAID

After every workshop, the evidence of what has shifted is best carried in the words of the men themselves.

From the March to June period, the reflections were striking in their honesty and their relief. *There is no shame in crying.* That sentence, offered by a participant, contains a lifetime of conditioning being gently set aside. Another participant named something that took real courage to say: *I can speak about my pain. It is not weakness, but strength.* Others spoke of feeling welcomed and safe, an experience that is not guaranteed in any of the contexts from which these men came. One participant said he would go and apologise to those he had hurt. Another noted that he had never liked silence before, but that now he did - a small, profound signal that something internal had shifted toward stillness and reflection.

From the July to November period, the voices continued in the same register of quiet awakening. A prison warden, a man whose role places him on the other side of a significant institutional divide from the inmates he oversees, reflected that the session had helped him understand inmates more deeply. That is not a small thing. It is the beginning of a more human relationship across one of society's most dehumanising boundaries. Other participants spoke of feeling safe enough to open up, of seeing men through a different lens, of recognising that they too could become mentors to others. One reflection, offered with disarming simplicity, said: *I realise how much I have hurt myself by not sharing my feelings.* And another: *Speaking about one's pain brings inner peace.*

WHY THIS WORK IS PEACEBUILDING

It would be easy to look at Imbadu and see a men's wellness programme. It is that, but it is significantly more. When a man who has spent his life managing pain through silence or aggression discovers a different way of being in himself, the ripple effect is not contained to him. It moves into his home, his relationship with his partner, his parenting, his presence in his community. When a boy in Khayelitsha learns, before the patterns have fully hardened, that vulnerability is strength and that he can speak about what hurts him, the trajectory of his life, and the lives he will touch, shifts.

This is gender justice at its most foundational. Not protest, not policy, not even education in the traditional sense, but the slow, intimate, irreplaceable work of helping men become more fully human. In a country where so much violence begins in the unprocessed pain of men who were never given a different option, Imbadu offers that option, one circle at a time.

The work continues. And every man who walks out of an Imbadu workshop carrying something new carries it somewhere. That is enough reason to keep going.



GERI for LGBTQ+ Healing Across the Gender Spectrum

There are wounds that do not show up in clinical reports. They are carried in the body, buried in silence, passed between generations like an inheritance nobody asked for. For many members of the LGBTQ+ community, the wound is not only personal. It is structural. It has been legislated, preached, enforced, and in too many cases, handed down by the very institutions, families, and communities that were supposed to offer safety.

The GERI for LGBTQ+ Healing Across the Gender Spectrum programme was built in direct response to that reality. It is a specialised application of the GERI methodology, adapted to create conditions of genuine safety and skilled facilitation for LGBTQ+ people to do the inner work of healing, not in isolation, but in community. The programme holds space for those who identify as queer, transgender, non-binary, or gender non-conforming, and welcomes allies wishing to explore the expanding landscape of gender identity and expression with openness and integrity. At its core, this is a programme about transformation. Not the kind that requires anyone to become something other than who they are, but the kind that asks us to look honestly at where we have been, what has been done to us, and what it might mean to live, finally and fully, in the truth of our own selves. It is rooted in a trauma-informed, healing-centred approach because we know that for many participants, simply arriving at one of our workshops is itself an act of courage.

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

In 2025, the programme was guided by three core objectives: to build community-led healing circles with an explicit LGBTQ+ focus; to create safe spaces for the facilitation of single-identity queer workshops; and to expand digital and remote outreach so that participants who cannot access in-person programmes are not left behind. These objectives are not independent of one another. They form a coherent vision of what it looks like when a marginalised community is offered not just a seat at the table, but an entire room built with them in mind.

WHERE WE SHOWED UP

This year, Genderworks delivered three distinct activities under the LGBTQ+ programme, each shaped by the specific context and needs of its participants. The first activity was a seven-week online LGBTQ Global Course from the 3 May - 14 June, attended by twenty-one participants across different countries and time zones. The online format, when resourced and held well, carries its own form of intimacy. People join from their homes, sometimes from rooms where nobody else in their household knows they are participating. That reality, invisible to the facilitator but always present, shapes how we hold space.

The second was a three-day in-person LGBTQ GERI Workshop held at North-West University from the 9-11 July 2025. Twenty-eight people came together in a residential setting, which allowed for the kind of depth and continuity that shorter programmes cannot always achieve. The university context brought together students, staff, and community members at different stages of their journeys, and the collective experience was powerful.

The third was an online introductory session offered specifically to LGBTQ+ activists from East London on the 25 September 2025, attended by fifteen participants. This session was designed as both an orientation to the GERI methodology and a relationship-building moment, connecting our work to the local organising landscape in a community that lives, advocates, and is often endangered in the same streets.

Across all three activities, sixty-four people were reached, each of them carrying a story that this programme was designed to meet with dignity.

WHAT CHANGED

The outcomes of this programme cannot be fully captured in metrics, but they can be named with care. Participants reported a reclaiming of personal identity, a phrase that sounds simple until you understand what it costs to lose that identity in the first place, and how long the road back can be. Many described a shift from experiencing themselves as victims of their circumstances to becoming witnesses to their own stories, able to hold their history with compassion rather than shame. Several participants reported a deepening connection with their spiritual lives, finding that contemplative practice, long weaponised against them by religious institutions, could be something they chose and held on their own terms.

At the level of knowledge and awareness, the programme opened conversations about cisnormativity and heteronormativity as systemic barriers, not simply personal opinions or cultural preferences. Participants developed a more grounded understanding of how patriarchy and gender injustice operate not in the abstract but in the everyday fabric of their lives. They named this not with despair but with a kind of clarity that can only come from being seen and heard by others who understand.

Perhaps most meaningfully, participants strengthened their capacity for empathic listening and constructive communication, skills that matter not only within the workshop space but in every relationship they return to afterward. They left more able to speak openly about gender and sexuality, not because the world outside had changed, but because something inside them had.

A VOICE THAT CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF A LIFETIME

Among the stories that emerged from the online course this year, one stays with us and asks to be heard. A lesbian woman from Cape Town wrote:

"I came out at sixty-two, after thirty-five years of marriage to a man I respected but didn't love in the way I understood love could be. I had always known, on some level. But growing up coloured in apartheid South Africa, sexuality was not a conversation anyone was having. You survived. You conformed. You found a decent man and you built a life. The grief of coming out so late is real - I mourn the decades I didn't have. But I refuse to let that grief consume the joy of who I am now. I have a partner. I have a community. At sixty-two, I am living my first honest chapter, and it is extraordinary."

We sit with this story not only for its honesty but for what it reveals about the cost of silence. The intersections she names: race, class, religion, political repression, gender, are not background details. They are the architecture of a world that made her silence feel like the only safe option for most of her life. That she found her way to honesty, and to joy, is not just a personal triumph. It is a testament to what becomes possible when people are finally offered a space that was genuinely built for them.

THE TERRAIN IS STILL HARD

We would be doing a disservice to our participants and to the integrity of this work if we reported only what went well. The challenges this programme faces are real, structural, and in some cases, worsening. Anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in several countries from which participants in our online programmes originate creates significant barriers to safe enrolment. When criminalisation is not a hypothetical but a lived threat, asking someone to participate in an "LGBTQ course" is asking them to take an enormous risk. We are working through how to navigate this with greater care.

Religious and spiritual conflict continues to be one of the most tender and complicated fault lines we encounter. For many participants, faith is not the enemy, it is something precious that has been weaponised against them. We do not enter this terrain with certainty, but with humility.

Legislative and political hostility in South Africa is not easing. In the townships and peri-urban communities we are seeking to reach; homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and intersexism are not merely social attitudes. They are forces with real consequences for people’s safety. Our aspiration to expand the programme into these communities is genuine, and so is our awareness of what that expansion demands in terms of community trust, localised facilitation capacity, and careful relationship-building.

Connectivity remains a practical barrier for remote participants. Data costs, inconsistent infrastructure, and limited tech literacy can make a well-resourced online programme effectively inaccessible to the people who need it most. We are exploring how to close that gap, and we know we are not yet where we need to be.

What we will do differently next year is deepen our investment in the partnerships and relationships that make this work possible, working more closely with faith-based organisations, NGOs, civil society networks, and universities, and expanding our reach beyond the Western Cape by working alongside Genderworks provincial leads. We are also committed to building the facilitator pipeline: training more LGBTQ+ trainers, facilitators, and interns who bring the authority of lived experience to the spaces they hold.

WHO WALKED WITH US

This year’s programme would not have been possible without the partnership of North-West University, who sponsored travel and accommodation for the facilitation team, provided the venue, and extended institutional welcome to work that not every university would embrace. GERI continues to provide ongoing funding support for Genderworks’ workshop roll-out in the Western Cape, and that sustained relationship undergirds much of what we are able to offer. These are not transactional relationships. They are signs of a growing conviction, held by institutions beyond our own, that this work belongs in the world.

A TESTIMONY THAT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

We close this chapter with the words of a non-binary participant from the North-West University workshop. They were spoken during the truth forum process, and they are offered here with permission and with reverence.

“The church was my entire world. I was a worship leader, a pastor’s son, a young person whose identity was completely formed inside that community. When my pastor found out I was gay, I was asked to step down, then to leave. The rejection was devastating. In the years that followed, I tried to pray the gay away. I entered a programme that I now understand was conversion therapy. I attempted suicide. Recovery began when I found a small affirming church - twenty people in a community hall, led by a gay pastor who had survived his own exile. He told me that God did not make a mistake when He made me. I had heard those words before, but never from someone who had lived them. That was the moment I began to come back to life.”

This is what we are working toward. Not a world without pain, but a world in which no one is left to carry that pain alone. A world where words of love, kindness care and compassion are spoken early, spoken often, and heard by every child who needs them before the damage is done.



The Human Sexuality Workshop

There is a particular kind of courage required to sit in a room with someone whose experience of their own body, desire, and identity is entirely unlike your own, and to listen, really listen, without the armour of assumption. The Human Sexuality programme was designed to make exactly that kind of courage possible. Not by demanding it, but by creating the conditions in which it can emerge naturally, tentatively, and with genuine safety.

At its heart, this programme holds a deceptively simple but radical conviction that queer and straight people, brought together with skilled facilitation and genuine intentionality, can become resources for one another. Not adversaries across a culture war divide. But human beings who have each, in their own way, navigated the complicated terrain of sexuality, spirituality, shame, and self-acceptance; and who have something real to offer each other because of it.

The programme addresses two intertwined challenges. The first is internal: the often-fraught relationship between a person's sexuality and their spiritual life, particularly in contexts where religious communities have taught people to experience these as irreconcilable. The second is relational: the gulf of misunderstanding, projection, and disconnection that frequently exists between people of different sexual orientations and gender identities, not because of malice, but because of the absence of genuine encounter. This programme sets out to close both of those gaps, one honest conversation at a time.

WHAT WE COMMITTED TO THIS YEAR

The 2025 programme year was shaped by a set of defined commitments made in partnership with the Other Foundation, whose support made this work possible. The year was framed around completing the contracted grant cycle with integrity, delivering the final Human Sexuality Workshop, closing out the reporting obligations with care and transparency, and continuing to consolidate the relationships and foundations laid through our work in Namibia.

WHAT WE DID

One Human Sexuality Workshop was recruited for, planned, and delivered this year in South Africa. The recruitment process was open and attracted a substantial level of interest - which was, in itself, a signal of the hunger that exists for this kind of space. People are looking for somewhere to speak honestly about sex, desire, faith, and identity without being judged, managed, or reduced to a position in a political debate. The workshop offered that, and the response reflected the need.

The workshop brought together participants across a spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities: cisgender and transgender, queer and straight, from different faith backgrounds and life experiences. The facilitation drew on the GERI methodology, adapted specifically for this context, and created what we try to describe as a "safe enough" space, not a space where nothing difficult arises, but a space where what arises can be held with enough trust and skill that it becomes generative rather than destructive.

In parallel, the team progressed conversations with partners in Namibia about the future roll-out of The Human Sexuality Workshop there, a development that speaks to the growing reach of this methodology and the appetite for this work across the region.

Final reporting and close-out obligations with the Other Foundation were also completed during this period, bringing the grant cycle to a formal close while laying the groundwork for what may come next.

WHAT SHIFTED

The outcomes of this workshop are difficult to summarise cleanly, because they were not uniform. That is the nature of a process this honest. People arrived carrying different things, and they left having been moved in different directions, which is exactly how it should be.

What participants shared, across the diversity of their starting points, was a deepening relationship with their own stories. There was a quality of recognition that the workshop seemed to catalyse; the recognition that one's own journey with sexuality, its formation, its disruptions, the moments of shame and the moments of liberation, has not been arbitrary. It has been shaped by specific forces, specific relationships, specific messages absorbed in childhood and adolescence. Naming those forces, in the company of others doing the same, opened something that had in many cases been closed for years.

The encounter across difference was equally significant. Participants who came in holding assumptions about what it means to be queer, about what it means to be straight, and about the distance between their world and someone else's. This distance often starting collapsing in the most unexpected ways. Not because difference dissolved, but because underneath it, something recognisably shared emerged: the longing to be known, to be free, to live without the particular weight of shame.

THREE VOICES FROM INSIDE THE ROOM

Some of what happened in that workshop space can only be conveyed through the voices of the people who were there.

A cisgender woman who identifies as lesbian shared this:

"I realised that my journey - and all my experiences in life - good or bad - are valid and have value. I am valued and I am worthy. I have also realised that it's okay to be me, and that my feelings, my desires, my goals, my wants, my needs - it's okay to have them. I no longer need to feel shame. I no longer need to hide who I am. I am deserving of standing in the open and having the sun bask her light on me. I now make choices out of love for myself - not to appease someone else."

What strikes us in these words is not only their beauty but their precision. She is not describing an epiphany that arrived from outside. She is describing a homecoming. A return to a self that was always there, waiting to be received.

A cisgender straight man offered a reflection that captures something of the workshop's unusual architecture:

"Worthwhile because it was balanced - between abstract but important concepts and real-life stories. Between reflections and creative brainstorming. Between fun and serious. Between sex and spirit. Between mind and body. In all this balance there was room for everyone - for people who wanted to get totally different takeaways."

His words illuminate something we believe about this work. Genuine inclusion is not achieved by flattening difference, but by building a container large enough that difference can be held. The balance he describes was not accidental. It was the result of careful design and skilled facilitation.

And from a cisgender straight woman who grew up in an evangelical Christian community, a reflection that is perhaps the most quietly radical of all:

"I hardly ever feel comfortable participating in conversations around sex, so to have a space in which it was not just tolerated but celebrated was a new and significant thing for me."

We do not take lightly what it represents for someone from that background to have experienced the conversation about sex not as transgression, but as celebration. That is a profound shift, one that ripples outward into families, communities, and congregations long after the workshop weekend ends.

WHERE WE HIT WALLS, AND WHAT WE LEARNED

This year also brought us face to face with some of the practical realities that accompany open, accessible programming. Despite a strong sign-up and genuine interest in the workshop, the actual turnout was lower than anticipated. Participants confirmed, and then did not arrive. This is not an uncommon pattern with open workshops, but it has real consequences when programming has been fully resourced and facilitated on the basis of registered numbers. Grant funding was allocated in good faith, and the gap between registration and attendance meant that some of those resources were not deployed as efficiently as intended.

We are taking this seriously. Going forward, we will resist the instinct to cap registrations too early, and will instead plan on the expectation of some attrition, building this into our facilitation and logistics design from the outset. It is a shift from an idealised model of participation to a more honest accounting of how people actually show up.

The financial close-out process also surfaced a practical misalignment. Our internal reporting categories did not map neatly onto the original budget line items, requiring multiple revisions before the report could be finalised. The lesson is straightforward. Financial reports must mirror the original budget structure precisely, and that alignment needs to be built in from the beginning of a grant cycle, not retrofitted at the end. It is a discipline we are committing to with greater rigour going forward.

THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

The Human Sexuality Workshop this year was held at The Commons - a venue that proved to be more than a logistical convenience. The Commons carries values of diversity and inclusion in the fabric of how it operates, and participants felt that. A space where you feel genuinely welcomed, nourished, and cared for is not incidental to a workshop like this. It is part of the work.

Our partnership with Tulinam and Diversity Alliance Namibia continued to deepen in ways that matter well beyond this single programme year. Five of their facilitators completed the yearlong GERI facilitator training, a development we consider among the most significant investments of the year. Building local facilitation capacity in Namibia is not about extension; it is about belonging. The goal is for this work to be led, eventually, by people who are rooted in the communities it serves, people who bring both the methodology and the lived understanding of the specific cultural, political, and spiritual terrain of that context.

WHAT THIS WORK IS REALLY ABOUT

The Human Sexuality Programme does not promise resolution. It does not ask anyone to reach consensus on contested theological questions, or to arrive at a single position on the relationship between sex and spirit. What it offers is something harder to name and more durable in its effect - the experience of genuine encounter.

In a world that is increasingly sorted into ideological camps, religious communities, social media bubbles, and political identities, there is something quietly revolutionary about a room where a straight evangelical woman and a queer woman sit across from each other and find, beneath all the categories, a shared humanity. That is not nothing. In fact, in the world we are trying to build, it may be everything.

We do not know yet what the Namibian chapter of this work will look like. We do not know how many more people are waiting for a space like this one. What we know is that when the space is held well, something opens that was closed before. And what opens, can grow.



HOW WE DID IT



3



Monitoring and Impact

WHAT WE COUNT, AND WHAT WE CANNOT

There is an honest tension at the heart of impact measurement for work like this. The tools that funders most often reach for, such as numbers, percentages, pre- and post-test scores, can capture something of what Genderworks does, but they cannot capture all of it. A man in Pollsmoor Prison discovering, for the first time, that speaking about his pain is an act of strength rather than weakness: that is not a data point. A woman in Cape Town, at sixty-two, stepping into the first honest chapter of her life: that is not a percentage change. A mother who stops screaming at her daughter and starts listening, the ripple of that shift will travel through a family for generations, entirely invisibly to any evaluation framework we currently have.

We name this tension not to excuse ourselves from accountability, but because we believe that the quality of our measurement should aspire to match the quality of our work. We count what we can. We bear witness to what we cannot. And we hold both with equal seriousness.

WHO WE REACHED IN 2025

Across all of its programmes in 2025, Genderworks reached a substantial and diverse cross-section of individuals, communities, and institutional contexts.

The LGBTQ+ Healing programme reached sixty-four people across three distinct activities: a seven-week online Global Course attended by twenty-one participants from multiple countries, a three-day in-person workshop at North-West University attended by twenty-eight participants, and an online introductory session for LGBTQ+ activists in East London attended by fifteen. These participants ranged from students and academics to community organisers, from people newly exploring their identities to those who have been activists for decades.

The Human Sexuality Workshop brought together a mixed group of cisgender and transgender, queer and straight participants from diverse faith backgrounds - people who would not ordinarily find themselves in the same room, engaging the same questions, with the same quality of honesty.

The Alternatives to Violence Project maintained its consistent, high-volume presence across some of the Western Cape's most violence-affected communities throughout the full twelve-month programme cycle. Workshops were delivered at night shelters, drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, secondary schools, including Windermere High and Kensington High, and across communities, including Mitchells Plain, Kensington, Facticeon, and Khayelitsha; reaching youth at risk, church leaders, teachers, ex-prisoners, and broader community members through both Basic and Advanced workshop formats.

The Imbadu Men's Project facilitated workshops across two reporting periods from March to November, working with men and boys in some of the highest-violence contexts in the Western Cape. Settings included the Facticeon rehabilitation centre, Mandala Park Youth Centre in Khayelitsha, The Ark Refuge Centre, De Noon Youth Centre, Centre of Hope, the Khayelitsha Rehabilitation Centre, and Pollsmoor Prison, where the programme reached both inmates and prison wardens. Across the two periods, well over one hundred and fifty men and boys participated in the Imbadu process.

In partnership with Chrysalis Academy, under the Memorandum of Understanding with Satyana Institute's GERI Programme, Genderworks also participated in a series of targeted gender-focused sessions, including Father and Sons workshops and a Mother and Daughters programme - bringing the GERI methodology into a youth development context with its own particular demands and possibilities.

Internationally, Genderworks' senior facilitators contributed to workshops, panels, and conferences in the United States, including representation at the 69th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum, and facilitated a workshop with Dream a Dream in Bangalore, India, extending the methodology's reach into the South Asian context. Second Saturday Circles were held monthly throughout the year, sustaining the global GERI community in ongoing formation and connection.

The year was also marked by one of its most significant long-term investments. Twenty new GERI Facilitator Interns graduated in December, the culmination of a year-long Immersion and Facilitation Training Programme that began in February. Five Namibian facilitators from Tulinam and Diversity Alliance Namibia were among those who completed the training. This development will carry the work forward in a neighbouring country with its own urgent need for gender healing and reconciliation.

WHAT CHANGED: OUTCOMES ACROSS PROGRAMMES

The outcomes Genderworks tracks are both behavioural and attitudinal, both individual and relational. Across all its programmes in 2025, consistent patterns of change emerged.

In the LGBTQ+ programme, participants reported a reclaiming of personal identity and a shift from experiencing themselves as victims of their circumstances to becoming compassionate witnesses to their own stories. Several described a deepened relationship with their spiritual lives, finding that contemplative practice, long weaponised against them by religious institutions, could be something they held on their own terms. At the level of knowledge, participants developed a more grounded understanding of how systems of oppression, such as cisnormativity, heteronormativity, and patriarchy, operate not in the abstract but in the texture of daily life. Their capacity for empathic listening and constructive communication was measurably strengthened.

In the Human Sexuality Workshop, participants across the spectrum of sexual orientation and gender identity reported a deepening, more honest relationship with their own sexual and spiritual journeys. Participants who came in holding assumptions about the distance between their world and someone else's found that distance collapsing, not because difference dissolved, but because something recognisably shared emerged beneath it. For participants from religious backgrounds who had carried shame around sexuality for most of their lives, the experience of a space that not only tolerated but celebrated honest conversation about sex and spirit represented a significant, durable shift.

In the AVP programme, participants developed concrete communication and conflict resolution skills such as the capacity to listen to understand rather than to respond; the use of the "I Message" to shift the register of conflict from accusation to expression; the recognition that anger, when understood and managed, can become a tool for resolution rather than destruction. Perhaps most significantly, participants moved from an isolated sense of personal struggle to a recognition that the challenges they face are shared and therefore addressable together. The transformation of a mother-daughter relationship, documented in this report, is one of many stories that evidence the reach of these skills beyond the workshop room.

In the Imbadu Men's Project, the outcomes were quietly seismic. Men who had carried pain in silence for most of their lives found, in the workshop circle, that speaking about that pain brought inner peace rather than further exposure. They moved from shame-bound silence toward what one participant called strength. They left with a new capacity for mentorship, not as a technique but as an orientation. They recognised that their own survival and insight are a resource for others who are still in the place they once were. Prison wardens reflected that the process had deepened their understanding of the inmates they oversee. Boys attending youth centre workshops began to encounter a model of masculinity built on vulnerability and connection rather than toughness and suppression - and they received it, often with relief.

THE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Genderworks' monitoring and impact work is grounded in a methodological tradition that extends beyond the organisation itself. Research on the GERI methodology confirms what participants have long been reporting: the methodology has a powerful and sustained impact on young women and men. It transforms hegemonic masculinities. It shifts the underlying gender ideologies that govern how women and men relate to each other and to themselves. Research also points to the methodology's contribution to reducing HIV/AIDS transmission, a finding that reflects the deeply interconnected nature of gender-based violence, sexual health, and structural inequality.

These findings do not stand alone. They are consistent with the growing body of international evidence on transformative gender justice methodologies, and they are corroborated, year after year, by the testimonies of the people who pass through Genderworks' programmes and find their lives genuinely different on the other side.

THE MEASURE WE RETURN TO

Numbers tell part of the story. Testimonies tell another part. Research tells a third. What none of them can fully capture is the cumulative effect of this work, the way it spreads, quietly and without fanfare, through the relationships and communities of the people who have been changed by it.

What we can say with confidence is this: in 2025, Genderworks showed up consistently for communities that are rarely prioritised by mainstream funding and conventional programming. It created spaces where people who carry the highest costs of gender injustice were met with skill, dignity, and genuine care. And it sent those people back into their worlds carrying something they did not have before - a language, a tool, a different way of seeing themselves and the people around them.

That is the impact we are building. One circle at a time. One honest conversation at a time. One person who chooses differently because, for a few days or weeks or months, they were deeply and lovingly held.

The Company We Keep

No organisation working toward gender justice and reconciliation can do so alone, and Genderworks has never tried to. The partnerships we hold are not transactional arrangements of convenience. They are relationships of shared conviction, built over time with institutions and organisations that understand, in their own distinct ways, that the transformation of gender relations is inseparable from the broader work of building a more just and peaceful world. Our partners span universities and community organisations, faith-adjacent spaces and activist networks, local soil and international reach. Some provide funding; others offer venue, facilitation capacity, or the irreplaceable credibility of deep community trust. All of them make it possible for this work to go further, and to go deeper, than Genderworks could manage on its own. We are grateful for each of these relationships, and we do not take lightly the responsibility that comes with being entrusted with their partnership.

- Chrysalis Academy
- Diversity Alliance of Namibia
- EziNgcanjini - Engaging Men and Boyz
- Gender Equity and Reconciliation International
- Gender and Sexuality Alliance Buffalo City
- North-West University
- The Other Foundation
- Peace Jam South Africa
- Satyana Institute
- Stellenbosch University
- The Commons - Muizenberg
- Tulinam Trust



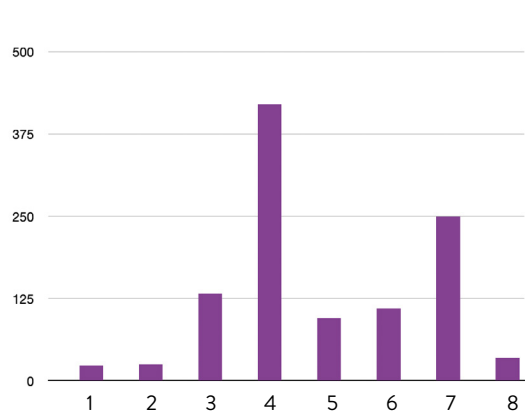
Finance Report, January - December 2025

Genderworks entered 2025 on a foundation of financial integrity. The audited financial statements for the 2024 year were signed off by the Board on 10 September 2025, confirming a clean audit of the organisation’s affairs - a quiet but significant achievement for a small, volunteer-led organisation navigating a demanding operating environment. There have been no substantial changes to the organisation’s financial position since that date, and our standing at the close of 2025 reflects a continuity of stability, even as the work itself has grown in ambition and reach.

The numbers tell the story of an organisation that continued to do meaningful work with limited means, and that managed its resources with the care and accountability its participants, partners, and funders deserve.

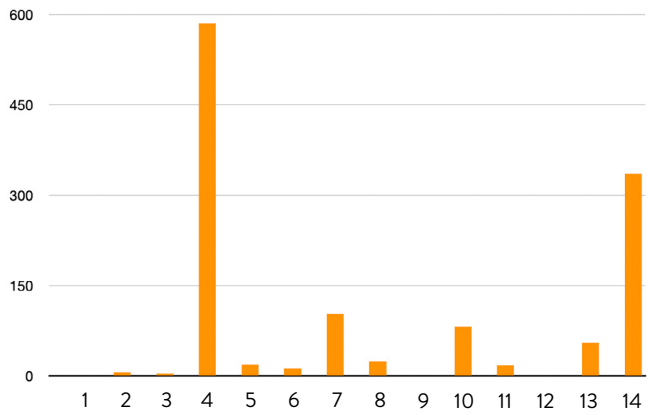
During 2025, incoming funds were received from Satyana Institute to support the delivery of all four modules of the Immersion and Facilitator Training Programme, the year’s most substantial programmatic investment, as well as stipends for the contributions of Desireé English and Tristan Johannes to the global GERI work. A final tranche was received from The Other Foundation in October, bringing the Genderworks contract with that funder to a formal close and enabling the LGBTQ+ programme work that this report has documented with pride. Funding was also received from Quäker Hilfe and the Gratitude Fund for the continuation of AVP workshops; and from Jan van Zyl, the Stellenbosch Dutch Reformed Mother Church, and Mias van der Westhuyzen in support of the Imbadu Men’s Project, both programmes that quietly and persistently reach people whom mainstream funding rarely follows.

The work goes on. And so does the search for the more sustainable, diversified funding base that will allow us to move from season to season with greater security. The graphs below indicate our income and expenditure for 2025 with an Abridged Annual Financial Statement that follows.



Graph 1: Sources of Revenue for 2025

1. Chrysalis Academy
2. Imbadu donations
3. Quäker Hilfe Peace Organisation
4. Satyana Institute
5. Training for trainers course funds
6. The Gratitude Fund
7. The Other Foundation
8. Tulinam Celebrating Diversity



Graph 2: Expenditure for 2025

1. Accounting fees
2. Auditor's remuneration
3. Bank charges
4. Facilitators fees
5. Hire of venue
6. Imbadu expenses
7. Project management costs
8. Reporting finances
9. Telephone and website
10. Training
11. Transport costs
12. Travel and accommodation expenses
13. Workshop catering costs
14. Workshop expenses

ABRIDGED ANNUAL FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

Figures in Rand	2025	2024
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	32,231	180,276
TOTAL ASSETS	32,231	180,276
EQUITY AND LIABILITY		
EQUITY		
Accumulated surplus	25,927	174,328
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	6,304	5,948
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	32,231	180,276

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Figures in Rand	2025	2024
Revenue	1,091,800	1,104,591
Operating Expenses	(1,249,927)	(1,054,982)
OPERATING (DEFICIT) / SURPLUS	(158,127)	49,609
Invetsment Revenue	9,726	6,771
(DEFICIT) / SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	(148,401)	56,380

The financial statements have been done in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-Sized Entities and can be found on the Genderwork’s website, www.genderworks.org.za



ROAD AHEAD



4



Sustainability: Revitalisation and Renewal

There are moments in the life of an organisation when incremental adjustment is no longer enough. When the world outside has shifted so fundamentally, and the needs pressing against the door have grown so urgent, that the only responsible response is to stop, look clearly at what is, and dare to imagine something bolder.

On 5 November 2025, the Genderworks leadership team gathered for exactly that kind of moment. The envisioning session that followed was not a comfortable afternoon of strategic visioning divorced from reality. It was lively, robust, and grounded in an unflinching acknowledgement of the context we work in; a South Africa where violence against women and children continues to rise, where gender-based harm is not an abstraction but a daily, devastating feature of life in the communities we serve. The team brought both the grief of that reality and the resolve that grief, when it does not collapse into despair, can generate. Out of that room came the architecture of something new.

A STRATEGY BORN FROM URGENCY

What emerged from the November session was a **Revitalisation and Renewal strategy**, not a modest refresh, but a genuine reimagining of how Genderworks organises itself to meet this moment. The strategy was brought before the Board at the Annual General Meeting on 11 December 2025, where it was adopted with a clear mandate: be bold, move with purpose, and do not wait for perfect conditions that may never arrive.

The strategy is built around the formation of dedicated Task Teams, each carrying interconnected responsibility for Genderworks' growth. The Task Teams will focus on Governance; Expansion and Community-building; Resource Mobilisation; and Strategic Communications. These are not silos, but load-bearing pillars of the same structure, each one essential to the integrity of the whole.

A slightly expanded Management Committee has been appointed, with designated Leads driving the work of each area. The volunteer team has been asked to sprint off the starting blocks. A phrase that carries within it both the energy of the moment and the trust placed in the people who have committed to this work without the security of a salary.

Four South African provinces, the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and Gauteng form the heart of our expansion plan, each representing a distinct landscape of need, community, and opportunity. Alongside these, our neighbouring country Namibia holds a place of particular significance in our forward vision. Namibia is now home to a number of newly trained GERI Facilitator

We do not expand for the sake of reach. We expand because the work is needed, because there are communities waiting, and because we have, painstakingly and over many years, developed an approach that transforms something in people when it is offered well.

THE WORK AHEAD

Renewal of this kind does not happen through strategy documents alone. It happens through relationships, through sustained resource mobilisation, through the unglamorous work of governance and accountability, and through the willingness of a committed team to carry something forward even when the path is uncertain.

Genderworks enters this next phase knowing that the funding landscape is demanding, that organisational growth requires investment before it yields return, and that the communities we serve cannot afford for us to falter. That awareness sharpens our focus.

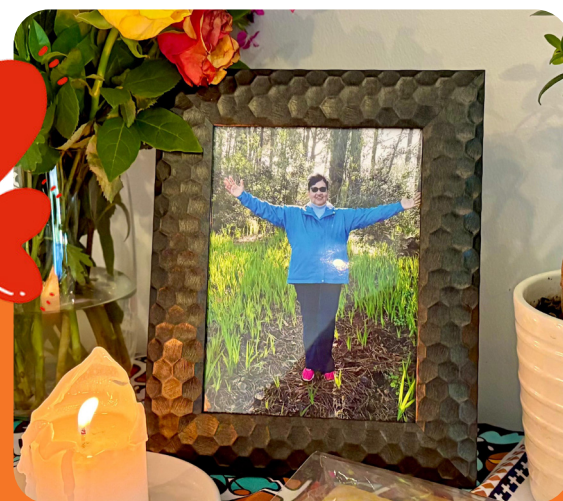
It also deepens our gratitude, for every partner who walks alongside us, every funder who trusts the work, and every volunteer who turns up knowing they are building something that matters. The fire has been relit. The task now is to tend it with the same care and courage with which it was first struck.



OUR GERI FACILITATOR TRAINING GRADUATES 2025

Patsy Alley
Brendyn Alloys
Zubeida Arnolds
Marc Bovim
Nortin Brendell
Collin Cloete
Sikhander Coopoo
Madelene Isaaks
Anele Mofoco
Nonzukiso Manqola
Leonard Marthinus
Gerard Samuel Mason
Earl Mentor
Noxolo Noleen Mongameli
Janine Peterson
Yashina Pillay
Thabang Queench
Asemahle Radebe
Hillary Shiimi

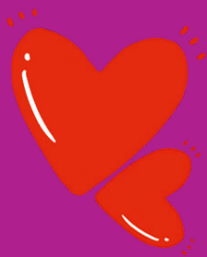
Posthumous
Sharna Gail Fernandez



IN LOVING MEMORY OF SHARNA GAIL FERNANDEZ

Some people arrive in a community and, without fanfare or announcement, simply make it warmer. Sharna Fernandez was one of those people. She came to the GERI facilitation training carrying a quiet courage, a genuine tenderness toward others, and a deep belief that healing is not only possible but necessary. She did not complete the journey she began, and that loss is one we hold with both grief and gratitude. Grief, because the world needed what she was becoming. Gratitude, because she was here, because she chose this work, and for a time, this work was hers. We honour her memory by continuing to build the more just and gender healed world she believed in. May she rest in the peace she helped others find.





Genderworks Annual Report 2025
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