



WOMEN'S PLATFORM

IMPACT REPORT 2022 by Shingi West, Women's Platform Manager

OVERVIEW

In 2022, Women's Platform embarked on creating an intentionally inclusive and welcoming space - placing our focus on empowering women to become more self-aware. The women were equipped with tools and resources that increased their English proficiency, self-awareness, skills development, and social integration in an environment that is accepting, purposeful, and allows for co-creation. More specifically Personal Development and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) activities allowed for mental health issues and GBV dialogue to ensue. The women found a place of belonging that was open, honest and non-judgemental while receiving the relevant support they needed.

Self-identified peer leaders within the platform were eager to help their communities and share their knowledge. Three community projects were presented by the leaders aimed at welcoming and supporting the local communities. The peer facilitators through the trauma-informed approach activities such as the healing circles and reflection sessions understood the importance of togetherness, responsibility and accountability to enable belonging, which they share with their peers. During the reporting period Women's Platform had more time to plan, reflect and prepare for Personal Development and the upcoming sector skills-trainings. All sector interviews and follow-ups were conducted, materials were purchased and packed, curriculums were revised and schedules were set and sent.

Women's Platform has consciously increased its debriefing sessions and check-ins with the peer facilitators to better understand the needs of the clients, and to have time to prepare and implement the suggestions. Feedback is received from all the women who complete their training, to share their course experiences during the various activities. After every open workshop, feedback questions are added to the post-test to better understand exactly what kind of workshops the clients need and want. All these activities create a better understanding of the clients, meaning more opportunities to be more welcoming in a deeper and more authentic way.



HIGHLIGHTS

- In Women's Month - which falls in August - we boldly celebrated achievements! The Women's Platform Graduation was themed "*I'm Every Woman*" to celebrate all the hats women wear daily. Over 80 graduates attended the event. It took a lot of planning and it was a joyful, fulfilling and humbling experience. Food was shared and take-home care packs were gifted to the graduates. Motivational speeches of resilience and hard work were presented by a woman from Zambia and a woman from South Africa, sharing how they strived to accomplish and develop their businesses from nothing. The talks were well received by the graduates, and a lot of the women could relate to their stories. It left them feeling hopeful.
- Women's Platform also held an online open workshop on "Uplifting Others." The women discussed what it means to be uplifted - to inspire, to encourage and to give hope to yourself and others. It was an interactive open workshop with stories of struggles that women are facing or have overcome. Additionally, the women shared tips for upliftment such as focusing on things they are grateful for and doing activities that make them happy. They talked about the power of positive thinking and how it is possible to create a positive mindset that is vital to one's identity and sense of belonging.
- Women's Platform represented the Scalabrini Centre and had the pleasure of attending a GBVF and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights training workshop held by Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) in partnership with IPAS, Community Advice Offices South Africa, Lawyers for Human Rights and the Department of Home Affairs. The training brought insight into understanding the challenges that our clients face when it comes to knowing about their Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and ways to access it. The workshop also assisted in understanding how to narrate our advocacy work and advocacy on service provisions.
- Women's Platform had the opportunity for some of our Leadership group to attend workshops highlighting female empowerment: *uniting women in healing, finding one's words, networking and business opportunities*. These workshops were facilitated by external parties; Amanina Unite and Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, all who carried the message of "building the sisterhood". Twelve leaders participated. The WP Leadership Group and Peer facilitators attended beautiful talks that inspired and rekindled a purpose not only for changes in one's personal life but rather to have a growth mindset and an urgency to make a change that protects the rights of women and children.
- Women's Platform identified a great opportunity in collaboration with The Cape Town Library which also hosts the American Corner. The Cape Town Library offered 15 of the Women's Platform clients a four-day Digital Literacy Skills-Development course which covered an orientation tour of the library, its services and facilities, digital literacy, information literacy, and communications. A further 15 Women's Platform clients had a slot reserved by the American Corner for Digital Literacy Training in their three-month cohort with a start of 15 women (the women have either completed their PD or sector training). A total of 30 women have increased in their computer literacy a skill that is sought after in today's world.
- The Women's Platform Leadership Group also held a community project for Mandela Day. Non-perishables were donated by staff, these included canned foods, rice, tea and rice. These non-perishables were collected for the Welfare Department at the Scalabrini Centre to give to clients. In addition to the collection of non-perishables, Women's Platform also made sandwiches and bought oranges to give to the homeless in Greenmarket Square area.



NEW PROJECTS

- Women's Platform is working on creating more time to plan, reflect and prepare for their activities in order to offer and deliver high-quality services. Women's Platform is also introducing new psychosocial-based opportunities such as the Emotional Support Group to serve the needs of women. Women's Platform's Personal Development cohorts now run for seven months of the year instead of ten months, and we have two cohorts per month. This allows for more time to do recruitments and offer prerequisite activities such as Open Workshops. Open Workshops offer vital resources while still reaching our target number. Women's Platform has also reduced its sector skills training from four times to three times a year for all the skills training. This will allow more time for debriefings with peer facilitators to improve the courses, the numbers and resources can be met and curriculums can continue to improve. More time to check in, offer healing circles and connect with peer facilitators to strengthen their roles and become mentors and spokespersons for the Scalabrini Centre. This will aid in perfecting referrals for counselling, spending more time with clients and embarking on Women's Platform's own Emotional Support Group that has trauma screening and specific trauma and GBV open workshops.
- For the 16 Days of Activism, three blended workshops were facilitated online and at the Scalabrini Centre; GBV and its impact on Mental Health with 48 attendees, Trauma No more: From Victim to Survivor with 55 attendees, and World Aids Day Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights with Wellness and HIV testing with 61 attendees. To conclude the 16 days of Activism, we held an event, the Women's Gathering Conference in collaboration with SARLN where female leaders from different organisations gathered to speak on their roles and how best to support others, particularly GBV survivors, and maintain self-care was held with 26 attendees. This has set a tone for 2023's 16 Days of Activism to have open workshops, tell stories of survivors and run a conference for leaders to gather and discuss a common theme.
- Training for the Women's Platform team to be more equipped for psychosocial needs has commenced. The training and supervision include the Welfare team and social workers at the Scalabrini Centre so that we can have a balanced approach to receiving and supporting our shared clients. A pilot Emotional Support Group was run with Women's Platform clients for five sessions to identify the needs and the topics the clients deem important. Some of the topics covered were challenges the women face, being foreign nationals, communication, gender roles and forms of violence. The trauma screening also gave insight into the topics used for the five sessions. Women's Platform skills training that happens predominantly online - Hospitality and Childcare - will start having their Day 1 at the centre to strengthen and humanise the relationship of the new classes.

IMPACT

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WOMEN REGISTERED FOR THE WOMEN'S PLATFORM

Psychosocial services and resources, and skills training continue to be provided to help women better understand their personal and professional development. Most of the new platform members originally come from the DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Nigeria and South Africa. The online platform allowed for interested women who did not live in close proximity to Scalabrini to also participate in the Open Workshops and receive information and resources relating to leadership, health, professionalism and human rights.

159

women successfully completed Sector Skills Training in the following areas:

43

Beauty (Nails)

34

Craft (Sewing and Beading)

38

Childcare

44

Hospitality



164

women graduated from Personal Development



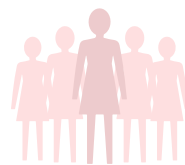
1970

open workshops attendance totalled at 1970. These workshops focused and shared resources on Leadership, Professionalism, Health or Human rights. *Please note some women attended multiple workshops*



281

women attended eight Women's Platform events



10

individual women participated in formalised leadership opportunities. This Leadership group is working toward making positive changes in their communities and from the skills they have they are ready and confident.



40

women participated in the English Conversation Club activities



179

women attended the Women's Health Clinic (SHAWCO)

>>> 41

children below 5 years old attended the Mother and Baby clinic (SHAWCO)



FINDING SUPPORT AND BUILDING LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Three women, each from a different country, met when they joined Scalabrini's Women's Platform. Pascale, Silvia and Zabibu each walked through the Scalabrini doors for different reasons and each went on to become peer facilitators with Women's Platform – bringing their own unique insights and talents to the platform. As they move on to new ventures, they reflect on their years of service and contributions to the Women's Platform.

SEARCHING FOR SUPPORT

Pascale, Zabibu and Silvia have experienced first-hand the promise and limitations of integrating into South Africa.

Pascale felt defeated after losing her business and being retrenched from her job. Searching for a lifeline, Pascale was referred by an acquaintance to join Women's Platform.

Before joining Women's Platform, Zabibu was a stay-at-home mom. She seldomly interacted with other women and her only family in South Africa was her husband. Although Zabibu loves being a mother, she craved the company of others.

Silvia felt a deep sense of loneliness after she fell pregnant with her second child and left her job as a housekeeper. She yearned for the kind of support structure she experienced back home in Zimbabwe. This led her to the Women's Platform.

Although these three women came from different backgrounds, they shared a desire to build networks of support.

HONING IN ON LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Pascale describes her time with Women's Platform as 'transformative'. "I joined at a time in my life when I was broken in so many ways... The Women's Platform course increased the desire in me to find new goals". While doing the course, she searched for a way that would allow her to make good use of her skills. Pascale is a natural leader, chosen for her excellent delegation skills and can-do-attitude. Soon, she became the Personal Development facilitator.

Since becoming the Personal Development facilitator, Pascale has held space for other people to discover their strengths and weaknesses, develop their communication skills, and learn effective strategies for managing conflict.

Pascale has developed her own interpersonal skills in the process too. "It was a mutual learning experience," she says.

Pascale notes that although the Women's Platform consists of women from various backgrounds and diverse nationalities, she could relate to the women by focusing on finding common ground. "The struggles are different but I think as women we have a lot of the same struggles; it doesn't matter the background." For Pascale, the best thing about being a Personal Development facilitator is witnessing the positive growth from learners who put in the work at the WP.

Pascale now runs an organic hair product business. She is also a student at Uplearn, studying towards her bachelor's degree.

HANDMADE GOODNESS

Driven by her desire to meet other women and gain a marketable skill, Zabibu joined the Sector skills Craft training at the Women Platform. She says that being at the Women's Platform improved her self-confidence, "I am much more confident now than I was back then". Zabibu says sewing or beading a product from start to finish can be tremendously rewarding. Soon, Zabibu went on to become the Craft facilitator.

The Craft Sector training offers both sewing and beading. While facilitating the beading class, she started furthering her learning by doing different sewing classes on the side. She then received a grant, from Scalabrini, to purchase a sewing machine and gained the courage to turn her hobby into a business. She then became the facilitator for the sewing course.

Zabibu has been teaching and mentoring women at Scalabrini for three years. She loves sharing her skills and through the years has learned the importance of adapting one's teaching methods to suit the needs and circumstances of every learner. Zabibu explains that sometimes the biggest challenge is when learners struggle to grasp the skills. She realised that most times, it is because the learner was struggling with personal issues. In response, Women's Platform introduced emotional support groups to help women who have experienced emotional trauma, to effectively manage and cope with their emotions.

Zabibu is moving back to her home country in Burundi, where she plans on venturing out into the nails and beauty industry. "I have started learning how to apply make-up for other people," says Zabibu. She is optimistic about what the future holds.



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BEING IN SERVICE OF OTHERS

Silvia, who has been with Women's Platform since 2019- explains that Women's Platform provided her with a greater sense of direction, where she learned the importance of planning and structure. "I was a person without goals or direction, I was just doing everything randomly." Silvia was admired for her tenacity and willingness to help out her peers. "I was proactive," says Silvia. She became the Personal Development Facilitator, alongside Pascale.

Silvia believes that leading by example is key to being a good mentor. "I want other women to learn from me". Silvia created a space for women to learn, connect and be heard. She states that although Personal Development is a safe space where women can offload their struggles, it is important to note that as a facilitator giving advice to mentees should be done with caution and careful consideration. Silvia notes that the key to facilitating the Personal Development course is to make learners feel heard and affirmed.

Aside from facilitating Personal Development, she started a home bakery business. This gave her the flexibility of being there for her baby while still earning money. Although after facilitating the PD class, she discovered her true purpose lies in being in the service of others. This is what drives her.

Silvia recently moved back to Zimbabwe, where she plans to share the knowledge and skills that she gained at Scalabrini, to empower women from her hometown.

FAREWELLS

Their time as facilitators has come to an end – each woman leaves with a developed skillset, confidence and a supportive network. We are so proud of Silvia, Zabibu and Pascal. Their hard work, dedication and civic-mindedness is unrivalled. We are glad we got to experience this journey with them, and are excited to see what they will do next.

LOOKING FORWARD...

The Women's Platform will continue to create a safe space conducive to growth and empowerment. Togetherness, belonging and welcoming will be values that we practice constantly. We will focus on co-creation with the peer leaders through advanced training, this will allow for shared responsibilities and mentorship to the clients from the alumni. Lastly, we plan to create a database of Women's Platform clients and their capabilities to easily refer them when approached by interested parties or when seeking their expertise.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930075335) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
Auditors: PKF Constantia Valley Cape Town Inc
VAT number: 478 025 1437

43 - 47 Commercial Street, Cape Town. 8001
Tel: (0) 21 465 6433 Fax: (0) 21 465 6317
www.scalabrini.org.za

