



Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme: A Short Overview of an Exploratory Journey

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QUANTITATIVE RESULTS TO DATE

FLGTP PILOT 1:			
Total Registered	Total Passed	Female	Male
28	11	5	6
		Race ¹ Female	Race Male
		1 W; 4 SA Black	SA Black 6
FLGTP PILOT 2:			
26	Not complete yet	15	11
		Race Female	Race Male
		1 W; 14 SA Black	11 SA Black

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Pilot 1 of the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme was initiated by We Will Speak Out SA (WWSOSA). It was conceptualised from the start as a collaborative project between WWSOSA Coalition members, and other partners have joined as the project was opened to the *Faith Action to End GBV* Collective.

Faith leaders have a key role to play in turning the tide of GBVF. To do so this involves looking within, reflecting on self and reflecting on the faith context. It involves being equipped with theoretical knowledge, sound theological foundations and a sense of growing understanding of one's own gendered history and how it has influenced one's gender positionality. But this work at individual level has limited impact if it does not translate into institutional changes, and so faith leaders have to be equipped to transform and equip their own faith congregation or whole institution.

This is exactly the opportunity and experience that 28 faith leaders had in the first pilot of the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme (FLGTP). With the aim of creating a gender-competent faith community – the programme is a response to the call to “do church

¹ Race classifications have an uncomfortable history in South Africa. The classification used here for SA Black people includes all those excluded under the apartheid system: Asian, Coloured and Black African.



differently” by the Methodist Church in Southern Africa’s Presiding Bishop Purity Malinga (2007, August 2020).

The Concept document sums this up as follows:

It is our experience that for education to take root, it needs to move beyond a 'workshop' or 'train the trainer' approach to a methodology that accompanies learners as they begin to apply what they are learning directly into their lives and in their local context. The aim is to accompany and support each participant’s learning and action journey in their contexts. The methodology is based on the SEE-JUDGE-ACT approach rooted in Paulo Freire’s work. The aim is to affirm and build on the expertise and experience that each participant brings, to create a collaborative learning process. Lectures or inputs will be limited and targeted and designed to promote deeper dialogue.

The Concept document further describes the intentions of creating Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme (FLGTP) that:

- aims to strengthen progressive voices at all levels within the interfaith community
- is rooted in contextual approaches to sacred texts influenced by liberation and feminist theologies,
- disrupts normalized patriarchal attitudes and behaviours,
- promotes mutual respect, dignity, and human rights.
- endorses emerging views among progressive faith structures that reject all forms of GBV as sin and patriarchal teachings as heresy
- supports the creation of safe and inclusive communities where all can thrive.

“The programme itself was innovative and evolving with a key learning being the importance of active critical and self-reflective engagement by participants for lifelong integration of learning into everyday practice. With a balanced theory and practical approach, many participants and other faith leaders are requesting ongoing practical and theological support to transform their congregations and communities.” (October 2020 issue of KZN Gender Vibes)

The transformative nature of the programme was summed up by one of the participants:

“It was indeed an eye-opener, giving insight into the things that we tend to ignore regardless of their impact in the family and community at large”

Robson Rogers, went on to say that he applied the learnings through setting up zonal Bible studies in his church:

“... it was from that moment that there was a silent spiritual killer that was exposed and indeed we realised that we had great work to do as leaders in the church.”

The Pilot 1 programme was designed as a series of 6 MONTHLY CYCLES, which included a plenary session on Zoom followed by the mentoring and accompaniment of participants in small learning groups as well as individually on request.

In response to the evaluations summed up below, the curriculum was extended to 10 MONTHLY CYCLES, which have incorporated many of the lessons learnt from Pilot 1 and its reviews.



This report offers some insight into the completed first pilot and how it has begun to impact the lives of some of the participants. It goes on to summarise the key findings from the four programme reviews undertaken, explains how the most critical and practicable have been taken into Pilot 2, and describes the progress made in Pilot 2 so far.

It needs to be emphasised that we have only just begun an ongoing journey, and we are “making the road by walking” (Paulo Freire, 1980). What is most important is to walk together, be willing to take risks, to be open to learning from each other, and to constantly review each step we take and improve as we move forward. While the ultimate aim is to develop a programme that is well-documented and offers clear materials for adaptation across diverse contexts for a multiplier effect, at least for now it is the depth and sustainability of the changes achieved rather than the breadth of its reach that will lead to lasting change.

PILOT 1: A 6-Month programme

The first pilot was highly experimental, and the participants were invited to be co-creators of the programme. The aim was less to reach large numbers and more about laying the foundations for a unique innovative holistic programme that had ambitious objectives related to transforming individual faith leaders at the person, cognitive and theological level while also accompanying them to take at least the first few steps to begin to transform their churches as congregations and institutions.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was that the constraints of COVID meant that the whole programme had to be run online. Unfortunately, digital inequalities related to accessing internet signal as well as digital skills were a key contributor to the high drop-out rate, even though data was provided to those who requested it. A second factor was the socio-emotional consequences of the disease in individuals and families, with some dropping out as a result of ongoing ill health and bereavement.

We undertook four key review processes to try to understand the challenges as well as the achievements to build on. This report documents the key lessons learnt and how these have influenced the shape of the second pilot process.

The paper begins with a celebration of some of the key achievements of the 11 participants who successfully completed the programme. (A 12th unfortunately failed to complete in the end due to COVID which meant that he missed graduating, even though he had completed the other requirements but was unable to complete his final, most critical, assignment.)

Stories of Change Emerging from Pilot 1

These stories were developed over a period of three months. The process was that the writer looked at their application forms and their assignments; then sent them questions and was then flexible in the response stage depending on whether the participants wanted to respond via writing, voice note, online meeting or in one instance, a face-to-face meeting. The writer then wrote into story format in a



way that all these can be used as articles in the Faith Action website or in newsletters – this gives some material for sustaining communications coverage now that the 120-Day Campaign of the project has ended.

Seth Naicker

Changing the gendered language of God was a key learning applied by Rev Seth Naicker who was a participant in the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme.

“I come from a conservative Christian background where women’s rights were diminished. Even though my mom was a church leader, she had to contend with a male, patriarchal society. While I was critical of maleness, I still embraced it and enjoyed its benefits.”

Seth explains that he believes he was a good candidate for the FLGTP as he had started doing the work on gender equality and addressing gender injustice some time back.

Seth is a reverend, business coach, social entrepreneur, media host, gender advocate and active father. He weaves these roles seamlessly and integrates the different aspects of his work through each role.

For him, strategy is key as much of his work is at a strategic level, in line with planning and mobilisation around human behaviour. So Seth believes that the focus is not just about ideas for change but about engaging those in power to shift and come alongside. At the same time, it is about encouraging people to interrogate the systems and influences that have impacted their learning and the way they think.

Seth explains that through the programme, he came to understand and name the “texts of terror – texts that terrorise women” and his response is, “For me, this places a responsibility on me to engage in the faith sector to drive change through both contextual reflection and action towards ending GBV.”

He believes there is resistance also to ensure that abuse of women is continually prioritised in faith spaces. “Women are being abused and broken every day. Why can we not preach gender justice from the pulpit every single Sunday? I believe that in every preach and service, at the very least one point should be directed to gender equality and justice. This is something I will be advocating for.”

That said, Seth says that in his own work and in civil society, he now speaks “formidably” around faith and gender justice as he has operated in these spaces for some time. “It has been my experience that when you are standing on the right side of history, even if others are not standing with you, you have to keep going. With my work partner, friend and covenant partner of my life, we will continue to do this work.”

He says that there are people in their lives who are open to having the conversations and are open to being engaged, and that he is grateful for those people because they are “really encouraging us to keep going.”

Seth says his particular project during the time of advent and the 120 Day Campaign on #faithingenderjustice (where he plays a strategic role and also hosts Courageous Conversations online show), has been around gendered language.

“In my work, I have refused to read of God as He and have tried to alter texts where God is spoken about as Father. I am not too



DENIS HURLEY CENTRE



southern African
Alliance of
Catholic Women's
Organisation

sure if everyone has picked this up but it is my sign of solidarity in doing so. So throughout the season of advent I have refused to use He for God. At times, I struggled to find translations that will be more directed to God being called God. And then also with Jesus, I have chosen to read Jesus as Jesus and not He and to take out the gendered norms of Christ and the maleness of God.”

Seth says that since the programme and his involvement in the Faith Action to End GBV Collective, and especially his role in the #faithingenderjustice campaign, he feels he is firmly part of a community that will be evident for the next 20-30 years of his life as he continues to grow.

“I am now on a journey of transformation, being encouraged and challenged by my covenant love partner to deconstruct maleness, patriarchy and gender that has been etched in the fibres of my being.”



Mbali Mhlongo

“I have moved from being a congregant to being a change agent within and through my faith community. As a participant in the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme, I reflected on the strides my church has made to be safe and inclusive. From gendered language of Loving God instead of God as Father to leadership and responsibility roles.”

Mbali shared her story of change. During and after the programme, she speaks of her personal change in language usage and how she went back into her faith space in her church and church groups and began to change the terminology. Through this one change, she says that “I feel God recognises me as a woman.” She says instead of saying Father God, she now refers to and has relationship with a Loving God. The pastors in church have encouraged this and have adopted this way of relationship with God and each other.



One of the actions of the programme is around gender policies so in researching this in her church organisationally, she realised that nothing exists and that also the pastors and leaders have no training in trauma response. Just researching this raised the issue and awareness of the need for this amongst leaders in various roles. While consultative engagement was planned, the continued COVID protocols unfortunately made this impossible but this now planning has begun into the new year.

Her vision is the creation of a gender desk as a “safe and inclusive space to be and to heal.” Mbali is passionate to serve as a resource person for survivors of gender-based violence in her parish and the nearby communities. Through her valuable and fulfilling experience during and after the FLGTP, she is now involved in the Trauma Accompaniment programme, which she had identified as a need for knowledge and experience for church leaders. She attended the online training of the Trauma Accompaniment Course and then follow this up by attending practical face-to-face workshop. She plans to translate the acquired knowledge and skills into practice by:

- walking with survivors;
- empowering and instilling hope in them through group / one-on- one sessions; and
- putting in place a valuable referral pathway

Sibusiso Mtakati

For Sibusiso Mtakati, being a participant in the Faith Leaders Gender Transformation Programme, enabled him to make changes through small group discussions and in how GBV is dealt with structurally in his church.

An ordained minister in the Protestant Change Bible Church, he came into the programme, which is part of the Faith Action to End GBV initiative, with experience in GBV.

“I had been a guest speaker at church events, talking to leadership and congregants on GBV. The FLGTP enabled me to enrich these sessions.”

An area of key interest and concern for Sibusiso, is that of policies and procedure. He says that even though his church has policies, they are not implemented.

“The lack of associated church-based policies makes it very difficult to address GBV in the church. This is particularly the case when the alleged perpetrator is in leadership as such matters are normally swept under the carpet and never finalised correctly.”

Since the programme, he has raised the issue of policies on gender, GBV and sexual harassment being constructed and enforced in his church.

While policy is essential, Sibusiso believes that the way to change mindsets begins with education through safe conversations in various settings. His experience so far is that the church can be an important place to hold these discussions. Further, these space are important in sharing knowledge and education to support policy and develop and run gender programmes.

“Through the programme I actually realised that in some instances I was ignorant in the Word. And when we are ignorant, we contribute to the very gender inequality we are trying to change. Through the small groups I have been engaged in, I am able to guide change based on my learnings.”

Taking the power of the small group dynamic further, Sibusiso has been using this in his family life as well as in his neighbourhood, putting the programme learnings into practice.



Thatho Daniel Khulungoane

As a black man growing up in a rural area, Thatho Daniel Khulungoane was conditioned to think and accept that a man who does not hit his wife or girlfriend is seen as a man who does not love her enough to show her 'the right way' to behave.

"At the same time, a woman or girl who is not 'sexually harassed' is often viewed as not beautiful enough to attract men. Further, a woman or girl who complains about domestic abuse is seen as disrespecting her husband or intimate partner, washing her dirty linen in public."

The Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme opened his eyes and heart to a different way of being, and a different way of leading as an ordained minister in the Anglican Church. "Through the programme I came to realise that almost all women are being abused emotionally and many keep silent because of the hope that one day her partner will change."



An emotion that rose up in him through the programme was one of regret. "I regret a lot of things that culture taught me, that men have all the power. I regret being part of the church placing men in positions of power and silencing women."

He says he began to feel restless and because of the programme. He started to use the pulpit to preach against GBV. He has been using his new position as Chaplain in the Gender Desk to channel hope for the hopeless.

"It's about using every opportunity I have as a faith leader. And we need to start early so we are educating our children at Sunday School for them to be aware of abuse and what to do. I also am in a position where I and other church leaders are now able to refer congregants to relevant people for assistance, support and reporting on GBV."

He says he also takes his role as a faith leader in the community seriously and is using his position to raise awareness and educate boys and young men, especially on how to deal with anger.

"I am also a regular guest on my community radio station and use this opportunity to educate about gender and raise awareness on GBV."



Sarah Phepheng

After the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme, Sarah began at local level in her Methodist church and she hold the position of GBV coordinator of the Women’s Manyano society. She built a small team of people with some gender knowledge, understanding of church norms and legal frameworks – people who have influence.

“We started spending time intentionally observing gender dynamics. Next we undertook a gender audit. The issues we prioritised for attention are sexual abuse and GBV; health issues including STIs and mental health; and youth and children’s empowerment. We have also looked at gender roles in the church, how Bible texts are used and what advice is given to men and women.”

She says that through the team and with other interested people, we observed how silent the church is about LGBTQIA+ rights, teenage pregnancy, HIV, abortion, contraception and sexuality. We also observed how challenging it is when biblical texts are used to explain these taboo subjects, and the type of treatment and advice that faith leaders give to men and women in dealing with these ‘sinful’ subjects and acts. Some of us are involved in gender and awareness campaigns but we are not yet able to do this through the church or by representing the church.”



Sarah reports that she has learnt to reflect more deeply in her church structures, teachings, activities, and has made some assessment of the overall patterns she is seeing in the church in relation to gender equality.” She believes the most impact the FLGTP Programme has had in her life is more knowledge and a systematic approach learned on how to deal with GBV. And that the church has the capacity to deal with gender and GBV. Moving from theory to practice in order to transform our churches.

“After these steps I stopped to reflect. Have my learnings and application been positive? YES. Do we have some gaps or challenges? YES. We still need buy in from some of the leaders, the clergy of the church. We know that changes will happen but we need to be patient.”



Bulelwa Sihlali Woolley

Revd Bulelwa Sihlali Woolley who participated in the Faith Leader Gender Transportation Programme, found she most implemented the learnings on marriage both in her own and in her work with couples in the church.

Her background both in and outside the church was through an NPC where she has dealt with many cases of abuse, being herself a survivor of abuse. So she began to walk alongside those in a way that was more transformative when applying the programme learnings.

“I think marriage and domestic roles have been most useful to me. My husband and I have been married for just over two years. I think that one of the main insights I have learnt is how to communicate effectively as a couple. The second insight would be how to deal with conflict most effectively as a couple. Even though Scripture tells us that the man is the head of the household – this is the leader in a spiritual sense – not a physical head. Marriage is a union and partnership. The Greek word used in Scripture translates “loving provider” and that is what the husband in a marriage should be, just as a wife can and should also be.”



She works with both the isiZulu and English congregants, who mainly attend different language services. “I am journeying now deeply and intentionally with young couples who are engaged and who are preparing to get married in the not-too-distant future. The Christo-centric and contextual principle is how I apply my theology to gender – I am able to apply liberalism to the gender ministry at any level that I am involved in. We have been training men and women in our churches according to those theological principles.”

She says that something she is grappling with is “how I apply my theology as it develops with regards to LGBTQF+ in terms of Biblical understanding, as well as gender theology and what my opinions are on marriages and civil unions.”

She has been so inspired by the programme and the positive results she is having in implementing it that she would like more support to investigate further: commitment, communication and connection in marriage. Another area that through the “groups we have formed, I want to better understand the role of women in the church throughout history, and how they can be more involved in the church today, in order that I may share and dialogue on this.”



Tshepo Ratsomo

From the knowledge and many learnings for Tshepo Ratsomo during the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme (FLGTP), he took up the challenge of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. He did this both within his church and in the broader society.

He acknowledges that members of the LGBTQIA+ Community in South Africa face many challenges and experience numerous human rights violations. Transphobia also makes trans people them an extremely vulnerable group. They are being ill-treated, humiliated and stigmatised.

“I created a safe space to engage with a group of LGBTQIA+ community to understand their frustrations, humiliation and stigmatisation. As an executive member of the Roman Catholic Church, this was an important step for me in changing my perception, and in listening, not judging and understanding their realities. How difficult it is for them to come out to their families and the community and especially how to practise their faith.”

He says that because they are not represented in the church, they don't have a voice. “I believe this is something to work on because the church must welcome everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation. In fact, the church must actually champion the human rights and the dignity of the LGBTQIA+ community.”

He believes this involves the engagement of the church in the community around these human rights and that it starts with education. He says he has already been involved in these discussions in the community through his church's partnerships with various organisations such as the local Thuthuzela Care Centre, Life Line, POWA, Sonke Gender Justice, Men on Track and Department of Social Development.

“We are working together to conscientise and change the perceptions towards the LGBTQIA+ community. It is a journey with the goal of creating a safe environment, to curb GBV against the community and it is of great importance that I, through my church, am part of spearheading this in our area.”

Another area he is keen to get involved with, is creating new ways and innovation for gender justice and ending GBV through the church at a policy level.



Aaron Matshediso

Gender identity is what Aaron Matshediso found to be a highlight of the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme in the content of the course, his reflections and in how he applied it back in his faith spaces. And for him, the power of storytelling is huge in shaping and challenging gender identity.

A key moment in the programme was when the participants were asked: When did you first realise you were a boy/girl? "It had never really occurred to me to think about it till then." He says growing up in a home where everyone did housework, he was surprised when he began to notice that in other homes it was only the girls or women who did the household tasks. Yet as he reflected, he realised that what he was witnessing in that and in other stories and situations was gender injustice and now he is able to see that in keeping quiet and not being an active bystander meant he was just as guilty.

Aaron spoke of Pastors who go through seminary without there being any study in theology that exposes student pastors to GBV. "When we studied the story of Tamar, this was my first encounter I had ever had with GBV in the Word."

The storytelling in the course made a huge impact on him. "We listened to a story of a woman who had been raped from young and right up until adulthood. Then we heard the story of a man who admitted he had been a perpetrator and now has gone the journey to be a gender activist." He says that these stories are the stories of so many people in the church and community and it challenged him to observe, analyse and reflect.

One of the first things Aaron did was to introduce gender identity to a small group called the Young Adults League. Directly using the course content, he began discussions on: when did you realise you were a boy/girl? The conversations were deep as he then introduced the concept of gender equality, before asking them about their views on the LGBTQIA+ community. To get the participants to relate, he told a story of someone who is gay in his own family.

"This was the first time they had been challenged in this way as I spoke of us all being made in the image of God."

He has set up a Gender Action Team of four people, two of whom are from the Young Adults League who are very engaged and active. They are currently developing a plan for introducing gender throughout the church. He says he will be calling on a fellow participant and one of the programme trainers to be involved in this.





Jean Botha

A lay minister in the Anglican church, Jean Botha has been a counsellor, sometimes dealing with trauma. She had never had to deal with GBV in her counselling and so came on the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme with eagerness and anticipation.

At a core level, she says, “The course has made me more aware of just how many people from all races, creeds and ages suffer from various forms of GBV and unfortunately very little is done to protect survivors.”

She says that she now understands that in most instances, cases are not reported as the survivor is either not believed or suffers secondary victimisation when the situation is made public, or when reporting to the police.



“It really is heart breaking to think about how little is done to protect people from GBV, even though church leaders, government leaders and police leaders say that things are going to change.”

The programme also made her aware of how the Bible has made men erroneously think they are superior as the older versions portray women as beneath men, while the newer versions place a woman on a higher level to walk beside the man.

Inspired by these learnings, Jean began a small group as a Siyalalela council executive member: *“we are in advance negotiations with the Diocesan GBV team headed by HABSA, as councillors we will assist the team that has been formed – the first meeting is planned for later in March.”*

She has also become involved in various team meetings and advanced these discussions in and through lay ministry.

“There was no resistance to this, however COVID is still playing a major role. We are not getting survivors back to church as they are either being victimised or are afraid of people seeing the scars and suspecting that they being abused. The various groups and unions are aware of the GBV team and are aware that should they have any suspicions they are welcome to come and talk to us.”



Tumisang Spannenberg

“I even got an African Women Devotional Bible!”

Tumisang Spannenberg believes that her life was changed through the Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme and she now uses her knowledge and new learnings to change the lives of others.

“I was especially excited about liberation and feminist theologies. It made me happy to realise that so many women played such huge roles in the Bible and this made me feel good about myself.”

As a lay person and church councilor in the Anglican Church, Tumisang said she had not dealt with GBV and the programme made a huge impact in this regard.

She was able to start a group in the church to make people aware of GBV and to provide a safe space for those who are being abused. Being able to suspend judgement was something she learnt through the FLGTP and has advocated for this in her work in the church and with the group. There has been a turnaround for her, and thus others, in victim-blaming and in not calling people ‘victims’.

“I think one of my biggest breakthroughs was when I didn’t judge a woman who shared her reasons for staying. I realised that while I don’t agree, I need to provide support. Also, a woman from church told me how she had to perform sexual favours to older men where she worked in order to get money to help her siblings. I felt very proud when I didn’t stand in judgement of her, realising how I have come a long way. In fact, she thought I would especially judge her since I was a lay minister and she was a member of our church.”

She says that this has helped in her personal life in that she listens more, is tolerant and has forgiven people she thought she would never be able to.

“I started a group with three lay ministers, two of whom are counsellors, and another person studying to be a lay minister. We have monthly meetings but as our views are all similar, we are looking to engage with others to bring in diversity. And I am also going to start a WhatsApp group to further discussion.”

Tumisang went on to join the online sessions on GBV Trauma Response training, which is also part of the Faith Action to End GBV offering.

Through both the programme and the training, Tumisang became aware of the fact that she had the privilege of being able to participate in these spaces and to understand, grapple with and implement knowledge and learning gained.

“I became really aware that many others do not have the same privilege and that our backgrounds play a huge role in this. When stories were being shared, I felt a wake-up call. I had always dismissed these stories as gossip or material for the *Daily Sun*. I know now that stories matter and that I will not turn a blind eye to things that do not affect me personally. I know better now and I will do better.”



Lucas Morena

Lucas Morena was able to take the learnings of the Faith Leaders Gender Transformation programme to the leaders within the church in order to transform the learnings into positive action. He says the leaders understand the mission of the church to be “a liberating one, more listening, embracing and inclusive.”

During this year, 7 months after the FLTGP programme ended, Lucas was installed as the Archbishop of the Liberating Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (LELCSA).

In his reflections on the programme, he says, “In the years that I have been in ministry, I had not paid adequate attention to the church practices that are unfortunately encouraging inequality between men and women but also practices that create gender stereotypes and encourage gender intolerance and exclusion. The programme helped make sexual orientation, gender equality, gender justice to be an integral part of my faith and ministry.”

First off, he spearheaded the establishment of a Gender Justice Action Team which is now assisting in driving the church’s overall ministry on gender equality and gender justice. Lucas reports that through the gender audit the Team conducted, they were able to identify areas that require attention. These identified opportunities for improvement include:

- creating awareness amongst congregants about the content of the Gender and Anti Sexual Harassment Policy;
- encouraging ministries of the church to firmly place gender equality and gender justice on the agenda of their quarterly meetings;
- incorporating gender related matters into Christian education.

He says, “We have intentionally integrated gender-specific themes into our monthly virtual Bible studies. These Bible studies are also facilitated and attended by believers from outside LELCSA.”

Along with his fellow faith leaders, he intends to hold ongoing seminars for the clergy of the church aimed at revisiting the reading and interpretation of specific biblical texts, the use of biblical language, analysis of our liturgy and rubrics, and so on.

In November, Lucas was nominated to the role of co-coordinator of the Faith Action to End GBV Collective and was very involved in the recent 120-Day Campaign to raise awareness on the role of the faith sector in GBV-related matters. LELCSA also upgraded their Facebook page to also raise awareness about GBV and how faith individuals and communities can witness against it.



MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

In total, four different reviews were conducted, in an effort to cover all perspectives, since this was the first pilot and laid the foundation for all future work to develop this innovative and holistic programme. These included internal and external reviews:

- Internal Reviews:
 - Participant Insights
 - Facilitation Team Insights
- External Reviews:
 - Full Programme Evaluation
 - Review of the Theological Components and the Integration of the Curriculum

Internal Reviews:

Participant insights²

The detailed application forms completed by the FLGTP participants served to challenge them to clarify their purpose for registering for the programme as well as offering a pre-test and an initial baseline context analysis. Some saying they had not had much experience in gender, but were still committed to ending GBV. For instance, while some were counsellors or involved in counselling, they had had no specific training or orientation around GBV and thus how to deal with cases of GBV.

Those who completed the programme all said they had found the content enriching, the theological approach challenging and that they appreciated the practical orientation in that it challenged them both on a personal level and then in terms of how to bring gender and GBV awareness and action into their faith spaces. During the mid-term review, all participants said they would recommend the programme to others and a majority suggested it be longer.

Content application on Contextual Bible Study (CBS) and re-claiming the Bible

Mbali Mhlongo: “I feel God recognises me as a woman.” She says instead of saying Father God, she now refers to and has relationship with a Loving God. The pastors in church have encouraged this and have adopted this way of relationship with God and each other.

Seth Naicker said in applying learnings: “In my work, I have refused to read of God as He and have tried to alter texts where God is spoken about as Father. I am not too sure if everyone has picked this up but it is my sign of solidarity in doing so. So throughout the season of Advent I have refused to use He for God. At

² These insights were taken from notes of two participant evaluation meetings, one on WhatsApp and the other was a session in the FLGTP Internal Review meeting that took place on 15th September 2021 on Zoom.



times, I struggled to find translations that will be more directed to God being called God. And then also with Jesus, I have chosen to read Jesus as Jesus and not He and to take out the gendered norms of Christ and the maleness of God.”

Policies, procedures

Sibusiso Mtakati: Even though his church has gender-related policies, they are not implemented. Since the programme, he has raised the issue of robust policies on gender, GBV and sexual harassment being constructed and enforced in his church. His is a very conservative context, and this is a courageous stance.

Mbali Mhlongo: After a gender audit, it was confirmed that there were no policies or structures in place to deal with gender and GBV in her local parish. She is setting up a gender desk. A key challenge she faces is that the church services and its groupings are separated in terms of language (and thus mostly race) of English and isiZulu.

Sarah Phepheng: She was initially sent by her Women’s Manyano to the programme, and so it has been easier for her to take practical steps than some other participants. She has set up a small team of people who have a good combination of some gender knowledge, understanding of church norms and legal frameworks, and who are people who have influence. “We started spending time intentionally observing gender dynamics. Next we undertook a gender audit. The issues we prioritised for attention are sexual abuse and GBV; health issues including STIs and mental health; and youth and children’s empowerment. We have also looked at gender roles in the church, how Bible texts are used and what advice is given to men and women.” Since graduating from the programme, Sarah has been asked to take up a new position of Gender and GBV Coordinator for her entire District. Taking into account the intersectional nature of gender struggles that she learnt about in the programme, she has worked closely with the Social Justice Ministry, both in her parish and the wider District.

From the personal to faith spaces

Bulelwa Woolley: She spoke of applying learnings in her cross-racial marriage and her counselling. In her marriage she and her husband are looking into improving their communicating as a couple and how to deal with conflict as well as how to interpret scripture for marriage to be a union and a partnership. “I am journeying now deeply and intentionally with young couples who are engaged and who are preparing to get married in the not-too-distant future. The Christo-centric and contextual principle is how I apply my theology to gender – I am able to apply liberalism to the gender ministry at any level that I am involved in. We have been training men and women in our churches according to those theological principles.”

Thatho Kholungoane: In the internal review meeting with all partners and participants, Thatho passionately described the importance of his realisation that how he had been socialised as a young man had led him to make assumptions and mistakes as to his rights in sexual relationships, and he committed



to working with boys and young men to teach them about the true meaning of love and mutual respect in relationships.

Aaron Matshediso: A key moment in the programme was when the participants were asked: When did you first realise you were a boy/girl? “It had never really occurred to me to think about it till then.” In the small group he had established to discuss gender and gender identity, this was how he began the first topic discussion as it had made such an impact on him. As Youth Coordinator in his Synod, he is opening up conversations about gender and relationships in his work amongst young people.

Public awareness raising

Thato Daniel Khulungoane: “I am also a regular guest on my community radio station and use this opportunity to educate about gender and raise awareness on GBV.”

Sibusiso Mtakati: “I had been a guest speaker at church events, talking to leadership and congregants on GBV. The FLGTP enabled me to enrich these sessions.”

CHALLENGES

LGBTQIA+ rights

Five participants raised the issue of the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community .

Aaron Matshediso: “This is the first time they had been challenged in this way as I spoke of us all being made in the image of God.” To get the participants to relate, he told a story of someone who is gay in his own family.

Tshepo Ratsomo spoke of an action he took, “I created a safe space to engage with a group of LGBTQIA+ community to understand their frustrations, humiliation and stigmatisation. As an executive member of the Roman Catholic Church, this was an important step for me in changing my perception, and in listening not judging and understanding their realities. I believe this is something to work on because the church must welcome everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation. In fact, the church must actually champion their human rights and the dignity of the LGBTQIA+ community.”

COVID-19

Most participants said they struggled with implementation because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Jean Botha: “There was no resistance to this, however COVID is still playing a major role. We are not getting survivors back to church as they are either being victimised or are afraid of people seeing the scars and suspecting that they are being abused. The various groups and parish unions are aware of the GBV team and are aware that should they have any suspicions they are welcome to come and talk to us.”



Going forward

Participants asked for a way to continue to keep in contact and maintain the peer support built up during the programme. This confirmed our original plan to work towards an online community of transformative gender learning praxis - and Online Community of Praxis.

Many participants, like other faith leaders, are requesting ongoing practical and theological support to transform their congregations and communities.

Three of the participants who completed the programme have contributed in different ways to the design of the curriculum for Pilot 2. One has become a small group mentor, because of his strong belief in the importance of the ongoing accompaniment of participants to enable them to follow through on commitments to apply their learnings in their own contexts. He has also brought in his organisation (Heartlines) and is spearheading a gender and GBV-focus in the organisation as from 2022.

Internal Review of the FLGTP³

Achievements

Development of the programme was an exciting process that enabled the facilitation team to challenge themselves and each other to create the ground-breaking contents in an integrated way, and to push their own imaginations as to what is possible.

The theological programme components were innovative and ground-breaking, which when applied in faith spaces have the potential to disrupt institutional norms and open up new possibilities.

What was so profound for many participants was that this was the first time they had a full and deep understanding of gender identity and GBV. The way in which the programme unfolded enabled them to look at what this meant for them as a person, then as a family member, then as a faith leader and then as a role model in the community.

Reclaiming the Bible as a sacred text that is able to have relevance to people's everyday lives and in particular, the gender dynamics and GBV in their own experiences, had a transformational impact on participants. The understanding of the sacred texts from a gendered lens led to identity change across the spectrum from 'repentance' to 'freedom'. The tool of CBS was powerful for participants to then be used to apply in their families and faith spaces.

As well as knowledge, the participants found that the programme equipped them to create change in their different environments, even if in some cases it was just first steps. The concept of the participants setting up a small team to drive big change, sat well with participants as they had the opportunity to immediately begin to take at least some actions through sharing with a team to then take the process forward together. Some used the opportunity to explore gender identity while others used it to drive policy change.

³ Daniela Gennrich, Nontando Hadebe, Merrishia Singh-Naicker and Xana McCauley. 3. September 2021. **6-Month Faith Leaders Gender Transformation Programme: Facilitation Team's Internal Review Report.** Durban: WWSOSA.



Mentoring was highly valued and especially important due to the online nature the programme had to take in response to COVID-19. The mentor-mentee space opened up more opportunities to discuss content, reflect and share about how to apply learnings.

With the curriculum emerging in-process it enabled the facilitation team to engage in experiential learning at the same time as making adjustments and innovations for the participants' learning.

Challenges

As the curriculum was developed in progress and process, this did not give participants a clear roadmap in advance or set out expectations related to workload, although they did receive a programme outline that clearly identified the outcomes of the programme and what was expected of them as participants.

The online format was challenging as this type of programme touches people personally and it is difficult to establish adequate safety for holistic learning to happen, is not ordinarily done online. While the facilitation team made a success of the programme by reorienting it from face-to-face to online, there were of course, gaps as there is a need for depth in relationships for deep group discussions, engagement and participant feedback sessions to be truly authentic.

Unequal internet access and data shortages disadvantaged some participants meant that, while some had good access to wifi, others were put under pressure as in some areas in South Africa internet access is very sporadic and unpredictable. Even though data was subsidised, it did not help due to unequal access to internet. Some participants also had little access to good quality devices, which added to the pressure.

Further, COVID-19 forced people into online engagement with no preparation, orientation or practice. For many of the participants this was a new way of learning and engaging altogether. This involved logistics such as lighting, webcams and headphones/speakers. More importantly, it pushed participants into new terrain of not being able to read body language, which is something vital to the participants as public faith leaders as part of their way of working and relating to people.

The high drop-out rate, with only 11/28 completing the programme fully was problematic, but given the above challenges was perhaps understandable.

External Reviews:

Full Programme Evaluation⁴

This was undertaken by an independent consultant with many years' experience of gender work in the global and African NGO sectors.

⁴ Alice Kanengoni. 5th October 2021. **Report of the Review of the Six-Months Faith Leadership Gender Transformation Programme (FLGTP). A Project Initiated And Held By We Will Speak Out South Africa(WWSOSA) With 14+ Collaborating Partners.** Johannesburg.



Achievements, Challenges and Recommendations

Overall, she considered that the fact that the programme took off at all was a huge achievement in the given context related to both COVID and serious financial limitations. The rich lessons learnt have provided a significant building block on which to build going forward.

In sum, she identified the following achievements to build on and recommended some ways to strengthen these:

- The holistic approach is innovative and a necessary condition for the programme to achieve its bold vision of leading to institutional (rather than just individual) transformation. A more intentional inclusion of the personal formation dimension might improve participant retention and extending the programme length would allow for more time for the participants to achieve more foundational changes in their institutions for sustaining the the changes.
- The above requires a highly skilled team, and thus points to the need for a more conscious process of building the capacity of the facilitation and mentoring team/s so that they are more comfortable with the innovative approaches used - such as the 'flipped curriculum' approach, the process of mentoring participants to become more self-reflective practitioners and understanding what is required of them as mentors in accompanying participants on their ongoing journeys of change. This may also help to reduce the drop-out rate.
- The collaborative and process approach to programme development has greatly enriched the depth and breadth of the programme. The relationships and contributions of each partner need to be formalised more to improve consistency of partner contributions and strengthen the overall pool of capacities and resources to contribute into the programme;

This links also to the need to strengthen and over time formalise the governance structures of the programme as it expands going forward.

- The online delivery programme paved the way for enabling it to progress even in spite of COVID restrictions, and it may be useful going forward as it allows for greater geographical and cultural diversity of participants, which is a vital component of challenging assumed norms and imagining different ways of addressing issues. However, support for participants with little experience to online platforms and access to data are crucial to prevent the programme from becoming exclusive.
- The expressed purpose of the programme, to prepare faith sector actors and institutions to participate more actively in multi-stakeholder initiatives is laudable and critical, this needs to be achieved more intentionally, but exposing participants to the NSP and key initiatives related to achieving its goals more overtly.
- This programme is innovative and ground-breaking and has great potential to equip one of the most influential sectors in the country - the faith sector. Therefore, there is an urgent need to access adequate resources for further pilots and to work towards roll-out and possible accreditation of the programme for wider reach and impact.



Review of the Core Curriculum and Theological Framework⁵

This review, conducted by a university professor who is herself creating an innovative holistic programme, at Masters level, focused on the core of the programme - the curriculum design and the extent to which it was a suitable vehicle for achieving the ambitious objectives of the FLGTP.

The review concluded as follows:

“The Faith Leaders Gender Transformation Programme as piloted in its first explorative rollout phase succeeded in collaboratively developing a first-round experience learning and praxis driven curriculum. Although the rollout warrants critical reflection on theory, method, and practice balance, it succeeded in accompanying change-makers in a journey to greater awareness. The learnings of this first pilot phase of the project make for a good foundation for refinement, development, and enhancement of a much-needed pedagogical process accompanying faith leaders to greater involvement in the GBV landscape.”
Professor Charlene van der Walt, October 2021)

Main Achievements, Challenges and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation were based on the following questions:

1. *Is the theological framework (intended to be rooted in African Feminist and liberation theological approaches) relevant, appropriate, accessible, and clear enough?*

Yes, it is. But needs to be more systematically and gradually introduced in relation to the more conservative and literalist frameworks in which most faith leaders will have been schooled.

2. *Are the approaches to bible study clear and practical enough for participants to use in their contexts?*

While these were woven into several of the sessions, the process would benefit from an overt inclusion of a module on different approaches to bible study, with focus on contextual bible study (CBS) as a critical tool to disrupt the passive receiving and reproduction of normalised interpretations that are not life-giving or appropriate in the current context, especially in light of gender-based violence.

3. *Is the methodology accessible enough to diverse participants, and those with different educational backgrounds? Is it adequately rooted in participants' own experiences, and is it true to the SEE-JUDGE-ACT approach?*

While this was underlying the structure of most sessions, the learning approach and what is required of participants was not overtly 'coached', which may have made it too challenging for some participants.

4. *Do the Sessions allow for enough debate and discussion, all voices to be heard? (You may not be able to answer this.)*

While attempts were made to achieve this, in the end, more than half of many of the plenary sessions comprised more than 50% input, with inadequate time for deep engagement. The fact that participants

⁵ Charlene van der Walt. 15th November 2021. **FLGTP Theological Review**. Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Gender and Religion Programme.



came in without any introduction to the content also made it difficult for them to engage as the content was still very new to them.

5. Is the theological component integrated effectively in the considerations of practice, to enable participants to apply new theological and biblical understandings understanding (praxis)?

The program tries to stay true and keep together several moving parts: theory + practice balance, contextual theoretical reflection + active contextual change-making, diversity of learning spaces and pedagogical relationships, virtual input, and contextual implementation. However, this was uneven and there is a need for ongoing reflection to gain greater clarity of critical focus areas, roles, and responsibilities amongst the facilitation and mentor teams to achieve a better balance..

here is also need for ongoing critical reflection on the balance between theories + the practice of change-making, and specifically, how the theory/theological content ties in with the step-by-step change-making process. At times it felt like processes developing alongside each other rather than a creative back and forth between theory and practice.

Survivor experience is formative to the construction of knowledge and process. How is this conceptualized and practically implemented?

Both external reviews recommended a deeper reflection on the high drop-out rate and what it implies for the enhancement of enabling participants to feel they are part of a learning community, as well as improving accountability through assessment, public presentations/sharing of learning insights, and strengthening the peer-learning communities (small groups).

Specific Recommendations that have been Adopted into Pilot 2

The following are recommendations that emerged from all these diverse reviews and evaluations that have been taken into the planning of Pilot 2.

Overall Programme

- To continue to develop the ground-breaking foundations, not fearing to take risks, as these are bearing fruit. ,
- The Cycles need to be planned for maximum participation and collaboration: In the plenaries, there should be less ‘lecturing’ and more participant engagement, with discussion crafted innovatively around content input
- Clarity on assignments - advance timetable, clear outputs connected to learning points
- Theory-practice balance - working towards a tighter structure but with more room for participant input and practical application
- Move towards accrediting the programme with SAQA within the next 3-4 years
- Explore more systematic ‘grading’ criteria for progress and accomplishments, while keeping away from traditional ‘marks’ as these imply there is a single body of knowledge to be mastered.
- Creating incentives for participants and institutions to be part of the programme



- Ensuring participants' accountability to the sending institution - this requires a more formal, structured approach as to how the Faith Action Collective formally engages with the institution, via the FLGTP Coordinator.

Participant experience

It was decided to intentionally build in an overt reflective approach to capacitate participants to become reflective and responsive learners:

- Revise the Participants' Programme Overview document to contain a clear overview of all the monthly cycle themes, and inform participants of the learning approach and what it requires of them in advance
- Find ways to build a sense of participation in a broader learning community from the outset, a sense of belonging to an exciting movement for change that goes beyond their own institution or personal efforts
- Build in self-reflection through guiding participants to revisit the pre-assessment tool that is part of the application process, to enable them to review their own progress
- Focus more intentionally on personal transformation as well as supporting institutional transformation
- Structure each session re SEE-JUDGE-ACT and explain it to participants
- Build in specific participant feedback moments – after each session, monthly, mid-term and at the end of the programme

Mentor experience

The mentoring process needs to be more structured and involve:

- Guidelines for mentors, especially as this is an accompaniment model
- Orientation for mentors on the programme content as well as expectations
- Orientation for participants on the mentorship model
- Documentation on the mentoring success, challenges and learnings

Systemic issues

It will be important to establish a core Curriculum Advisory Team for oversight of the programme development holistically. If possible, this core group should undergo Training for Transformation training or be thoroughly inducted into the methodology and teaching-learning approach.

To develop structural and role clarity and to improve collaboration and ownership, all partners from the Faith Action Collective who are involved must officially be part of or aware of clear roles, levels of involvement and mutual expectations - through developing bilateral and multilateral mous.

Mentor training and support in accompaniment to ensure a more structured approach and a system of feedback and reporting needs to be set up.

Funding: It is important to move from a volunteer approach to a system where an administrator is appointed and the different contributors are appropriately rewarded. This will ensure participant communications, registers, assignment submissions are in order.



Knowledge management as part of M&E

In terms of an intentional reflective approach using SEE-JUDGE-ACT (action-reflection cycle), it was decided that knowledge management will be implemented through:

- Notes of weekly FT meetings
- Monthly programme Coordinator reports
- Bi-monthly reflection meetings with a proposed Advisory Team
- Regular feedback from the Facilitation Team to the participants
- Documentation of all aspects to gather a strong evidence base for each next phase of piloting and roll-out

PILOT 2: 10 MONTHLY CYCLES OF COLLABORATIVE REFLECTION, UNLEARNING AND LEARNING

Applying learnings from Pilot 1 to Pilot 2

Pilot 2 has tried to apply the most important and practicable recommendations to Pilot 2. We have extended the programme to 10 months duration to allow more time for participants to be supported as they make gradual changes in their faith contexts, reflect on them and strategise going forward. We adopted a more intentional 'flipped curriculum' approach, which meant that each cycle began, not with the plenary session, but a set of simple readings and videos / audios designed to guide the participants to relate each new theme to their local contexts and receive some input to prepare themselves. In this way, the Plenary Session becomes an interactive session promoting collaborative learning that recognises the value and wisdom that each participant brings. The mentoring and accompaniment process has become more deliberate and the mentors engage in capacity building as well as monthly debriefing meetings, to understand more deeply what is required of them to promote independent and self-critical learning amongst participants.

Participants have received a systematic Programme Overview document that includes a module outline, a guide to the Learning Approach and what is expected of them, and in Module 2 will receive a simplified overview of what a Portfolio of Evidence means and how each assignment, task and activity report fits into the overall chronicle of their transformative journey in the programme.

Thanks to generous Solidarity Fund funding, it has been possible to much more intentionally build a sense of being part of a 'learning community', by:

- hosting an initial face-to-face session
- beginning the face to face session with a full day of self-reflective work and team building
- strengthening small group cohesion right from the start
- offering very deliberate support- one-to-one and in the mentor groups - for the use of the digital technology, and invest in the development of the group as a Learning Community, to minimise drop-out
- Developing a Mentor Training Manual, which will form the basis of the core materials that will resource future iterations and adaptations of this programme in diverse contexts.



Unfortunately, the funding has come to an end, but we are continuing the work on a voluntary basis until we access further funds.

Below is a brief summary of the Pilot 2 participants' evaluation of the first two steps in the programme. Since then, the programme has moved into Cycle 2, which is focusing on developing a survivor-centred approach to GBV Programming in the faith sector. We collaborated with the Phephisa Survivors' Network and a survivor at UJAMAA to facilitate the Plenary Session. It has opened up an intense conversation lasting almost a week about survivor stories and why it is important for faith leaders to take these seriously and make their places of worship safe and integrated enough for survivors to lead GBV programming.

Participant Evaluation of the WhatsApp Launch and Foundational Workshop of Pilot 2

All twenty-six participants completed an online survey within 2 days after the 3-day face to face workshop held in Ballito from 28th February to 2nd March.

Most Valuable

This was an open-ended question: What was for you the most valuable aspect of the time we spent together? Participant responses were assessed and grouped into similarities as follows:

- Meeting, Networking - 4
- Group learning - 7
- Power of Stories - 7
- Understanding GBV – 8

Meeting, Networking

For these participants, the most valuable aspects of the workshop, was about meeting new people from diverse cultures, backgrounds and social class; of creating connection with people who are different from them. And then getting to network within this setting which promises to involve teamwork.

Group learning

Appreciation was shown for the format which provided space for group learning in plenary and through group discussions which were "eye-opening" and "honest" dialogue. They spoke of learning from other people on unpacking views and hearing diverse views on gender - and then reflecting that their own thinking could be wrong. One participant commented, "It really meant a lot to me! In this time together I learnt a lot from the whole team!"





Another participant commented that the workshop, “... was to enjoy different people grouped responding in the fight against GbV and seeing them again replying in different opinions. But everyone feels comfortable and happy – by that I felt empowered in a way that indeed this programme is designed for me.”

Stories

For most of the participants in this group, they mentioned how they had gained from the story telling which was Sharing stories and devotions “was both painful n liberating”. Of importance was that some of the participants mentioned that the they could either learn from or relate to the stories of others. One reflected that they had only thought about GBV in term of culture and violence within a cultural setting, coupled with patriarchy – but that then this work “I would have thought that this is what we mean by culture, but now I see that this where religion comes in the patriarchal system.

Understanding GBV

All responses showed that for them the most valuable part of the programme was gaining knowledge and learning about GBV, its drivers and underlying factors. One spoke of the particular importance of now knowing how to interpret concepts and terminology of GBV.

Application

Participants were asked: How do you see yourself applying what you have learnt so far in your work and ministry? (eg. What are you doing already and how will you do it differently now? What new activities are you planning?)

Again 4 key themes emerged from their responses:



Deepen knowledge or understanding in current work or spaces - 10
 Include new action in something established - 5
 Start something new - 9
 A-HA moments - 2

Deepen knowledge or understanding in current work or spaces

Three participants in particular said believed it would help their organisations to be able to include GBV in their thinking and understanding, and to be an “advocate for gender justice by putting into practice what I have learnt”. A gender officer said they will now be adding the FLGTP approach to the work they are doing on strengthening the faith-based work in their area. One participant said their “approach will certainly be more positive and effective”.

Include new action in something established

Here the responses were about including a new lens, or direction or action around established channels and programmes. This involved:

- Incorporating into conferences, events and workshops
- Working on a local level, despite the national level of church being silent on GBV, through local networks with existing learning spaces like dialogues
- Including GBV in round tables – especially with a focus on rebuilding and restoring dignity
- Creating connections between the NGO and the church
- Incorporating into work being done at a NBV shelter
- Developing space within the local pastor network to workshop on BGV

Start something new

For those who spoke of initiating something, and starting something new, they did this by saying they have the foundation or space to do so. Some of the thought, ideas or initial plans involve:

- Project to address issues of GBV in church
- Outreach programme
- Suicide counselling
- A debate to guide responses to GBV
- Create a safe space for survivors
- Host a service focusing on GBV
- Conducting presentations
- Holding workshops
- Youth motivational evening

Some participants have already begun to undertake activities in their home churches, inspired by the week’s events:





AHA moments

Two spoke of a sort of aha moment. One said, “I strongly feel that this is a gateway to a new career development programme”. The other spoke honestly of how the workshop had opened her to “change the way I perceive things” when it comes to accepting generations of GBV experiences by “our mothers and grannies therefore it is okay” but that she had believed the assumed ‘truth’ that “whatever happens to gay or lesbian people, they have brought it to themselves”.

What Could Have Been Done Differently?

Responses covered variations of the following:

- Time management and giving participants time to ‘breathe’, perhaps some outside sessions
- Tell survivor stories upfront
- The code of conduct or guidelines and roles could have been discussed at the beginning of the workshop for clarity, or even sent beforehand



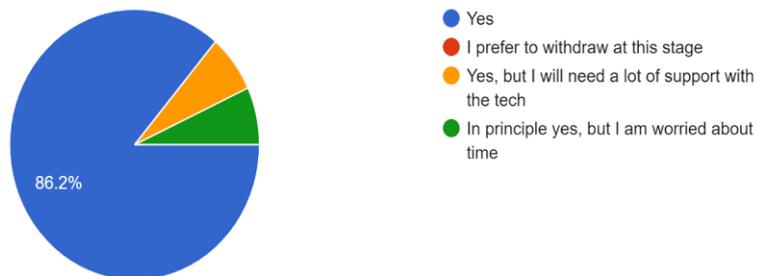
- More balance between engagement and less lecturing especially through slide presentations
- An orientation and explanation of the core of GBV would have been helpful as well as introducing LGBTQIA+ rights, with a deeper understanding then included in the next sessions/

Will You Continue?

Participants were asked: Are you comfortable to continue with the programme until December 2022?

Are you comfortable to continue with the programme until December 2022?

29 responses



What do you Hope to Achieve?

When responding to the question on the most important thing they would like to get out of the programme that would have made it all worthwhile, in different ways they shared their enthusiasm that they would want to be able to bring about change - themselves. Their answers in various ways showed their belief in change, that change is possible and that they wanted to be a change agent.

These answers express this well:

- I would like to see the change in the people around me. It stops with me
- This for me is a journey of learning that will not help me alone but my entire society
- To work amongst leaders of faith and to reach a place where we will have a strong united voice against the injustices our people suffer.

Additional Comments

Comments in this section showed appreciation for the programme, the workshop and the facilitators. There were no comments needing action. To quote one person's response:

"This is a good initiative, our faith-based spaces are toxic and preaching life-denying messages. And this is the time to change the way of doing things. Other than that I would like to thank the team and the organizers for creating such a safe healing space, allowing us to be vulnerable, my brokenness was displayed from day one but I do thank God for the space, I have also learnt a lot from our little small group... To [facilitator] Zama, I am interested in your teaching today that looks into the heart of an African Christian Black woman. I will be in touch for implementation plans in my community. May God grow this programme. Like I said I will need help. My readiness is determined by the support and mentorship we will get in these 10 months."





Participants spent time on the beach before breakfast, building strong bonds for their challenging journey together ahead.

TOWARDS AN INTERFAITH PILOT 3

Given the short time frames, we indicated in October that it would not be feasible to rush into a third pilot before we had even embarked on the second. The ultimate aim is to develop an interfaith FLGTP curriculum, but this will take a lot longer than we had hoped.

We have realised that what is needed is an approach that is rooted in deep listening to what each other's faiths have to speak into the context of GBV in South Africa in a consultative process that is likely to take a number of months.

We have begun the process in a first meeting about finding ways to unite the faith sector, held on 24th February. We have also begun to draw on established relationships with people of diverse faiths to begin informal conversations towards creating further consultative spaces geared towards building a shared curriculum.

A starting point has been to begin to draw diverse people together to consider preparing a joint statement of confession and intent to work jointly and severally to address GBV in our different contexts, and hopefully to work towards a joint Signature Campaign that will be used to interest and mobilise various faith communities to open or deepen this conversation within themselves as much as with other stakeholders of similar or different faith persuasions.

The next step was the creation of a short inspirational video, which includes calls to repentance and action by leaders of various faiths, to be boosted to go viral. At the same time, we plan a Launch Summit to open up this conversation with senior faith leadership. This will be followed by a series of consultative spaces to reflect deeply on this moment as a turning point for us as a country and as a faith sector: we can no longer sit by and watch (even if we protest against) the high levels of gender-based violence in our society, and we have to consider our own complicity (often by our silence) and what actions we are called to take to bring about a new kind of society in which people of all genders are safe, free, included and able to fulfil their potential. The video is to be completed before the end of April.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The FLGTP is a collaborative project under WWSOSA's leadership that incorporates 20 partners, who have contributed at various ways over the past 2 years.

Currently, the partners actively involved in leading Pilot 2 are: WWSOSA, University of KZN (Gender and Religion Programme), UJAMAA Centre, UNISA's Gender Studies Institutes, The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Indi-Afrique, Heartlines, and SACC's Gender Justice, Women and Youth Advancement Programme.

The FLGTP is endorsed by UN Women, ACT Ubumbano, the Denis Hurley Centre, Tutela Centre (Dutch Reformed Church), ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa), LELCSA (Liberating Evangelical Church in Southern Africa), World Vision and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

Written and edited by Gil Harper (SF Project M and E Researcher) and Daniela Gennrich (SF Project Coordinator)

