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NEWSLETTER



Expanding Hope and Opportunity: The Self-Help Group Approach

Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) has successfully expanded the Self-Help Group Approach (SHGA) to ward 6 in Umzingwane district, marking an important step towards strengthening community-led development and economic empowerment. Following a two-day transect walk conducted in June 2026, EWF engaged local leaders and community members to understand the ward's opportunities, challenges, and readiness for the approach.

The introduction of SHGA was warmly received by both community leaders and residents. Village Heads expressed strong support for the initiative and committed themselves to mobilizing community members for group formation. Community members showed great interest in collective savings, income-generating activities, and opportunities to strengthen household resilience in the face of recurring droughts, water shortages, and limited access to services.

The expansion of SHGA is expected to empower women and vulnerable households through savings, internal lending, skills sharing, and collective action. Through bringing women together to identify solutions to their own challenges, the approach will help strengthen livelihoods, improve household incomes, and build community solidarity.

For Ward 6, the Self-Help Group Approach provides a platform for communities to harness existing opportunities in livestock production, gardening, and small-scale trading while addressing common challenges through collective effort. The expansion contributes to a growing movement of empowered communities that are better able to drive their own development, advocate for their needs, and create sustainable change for future generations.



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The Power of Saving through Internal Savings And Lending (ISAL)

Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) under the (People and Organizations Working for Gender Equality and Rights) P.O.W.E.R project with support from Diakonia, conducted ISAL trainings for young women in Tsholotsho and Cowdry Park. The training addressed financial dependency which increases vulnerability of women to gender-based violence.

During the sessions, participants reflected on their current economic situations. Many had never considered saving money before, relying entirely on partners or parents for their daily needs. *"We stay at home and rely on our parents and partners for a living, hence we did not see the need to do ISALs,"* one participant confessed during the training.

Women learned to maintain attendance registers, cash books, loan books, fines records, and savings records. They practiced mock loan tracking at 10% monthly interest. In Tsholotsho, the Vukani group which was formed during the engagements demonstrated remarkable initiative, mobilizing contributions of R50 each toward procuring baking ingredients for their income-generating project—even before the training concluded. *"Now I understand that saving is not just about money,"* one participant shared. *"It's about having choices and a voice"*



Participants identified income-generating activities aligned with their existing skills:

- Sewing and tailoring
- Perfume making
- Baking and food production
- Beauty therapy
- Broiler poultry rearing
- Detergent production

At the end of the training, women committed to forming at least five ISAL groups across villages including Vukani, Bulala, and Lulane. Each group would develop constitutions, select leadership structures, begin weekly savings cycles, and integrate GBV prevention discussions into their regular meetings.





Creating Safer Workplaces through Peer Counselling

Through the FOS: Promoting Gender Equality at the Workplace Project, Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF) has successfully established and strengthened a network of peer counsellors who provide trusted support to employees experiencing gender-based violence (GBV), psychosocial challenges and workplace-related concerns. The initiative has increased awareness of gender equality, mental health and referral services across participating institutions such as ARDA Farms, Bulawayo City Council, Bulawayo Vendors Traders Organisation and government ministries among others.

The intervention has improved access to support services for women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. At BVTO alone, 35 women have received peer counselling services, while 6 survivors were referred for professional counselling. Increased confidence and visibility of peer counsellors has encouraged employees to seek help early, discuss personal challenges openly and access appropriate support.

The intervention has also strengthened workplace referral networks, fostered collaboration among institutions and promote a culture of wellbeing, dignity and gender equality. Participating organisations have committed to sustaining the initiative by integrating peer counselling into workplace wellness structures, mentoring new counsellors, maintaining referral pathways and continuing awareness activities, ensuring long-term support beyond the project period.





At Emthonjeni Women's Forum (EWF), we believe that real change happens when awareness is matched with action. Through the We Are One Fund, your support helps us turn knowledge into protection providing legal aid, psychosocial support, and safe spaces for survivors of Gender-Based Violence. Your contribution also amplifies women-led initiatives, strengthening grassroots efforts that challenge harmful norms and advance equality in our communities. As we continue to confront the structural barriers that erode the rights of women and girls, we invite you to stand with us your donation is not just support, it is a lifeline that empowers survivors and fuels lasting change.

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