

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026



ILITHA LABANTU
PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT PEOPLE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Acronyms and abbreviations	3
• Our Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles	4
• Message from Ms Nkhabele Marumo, Chairperson of the Board	5
• Message from Ms Ella Monakali-Mangisa, Executive Director	6
• Introduction and operational context	7
• Programme Implementation and Impact	9
• 2025 - 2026 Key Results Snapshot (Infographic)	9
• Clinical Programme	10
• Key Results (Infographic)	10
• Psychosocial support and counselling	11
• Impact story - Healing and Rebuilding through Holistic Support	12
• Community workshops and capacity building	13
• South African Police Service Training	14
• Policy and Advocacy	15
• Key results (Infographic)	15
• Legal services and support	16
• Impact story - A Victory for Survivor-Centred Justice	16
• Capacity Building and Training	17
• Picketing and Anti-bail Campaign	18
• Making Migration Safe for Women Programme	19
• Impact story - Restoring Safety and Protection for Migrant Survivors	20
• Submissions	20
• Outreach and Education	21
• Key results (Infographic)	22
• Advocacy campaigns and activities	24
• #Uthuleleni Anti-GBVF Campaign	24
• Take Back the Night	25
• Learner-Centred Support Programme	26
• School Visitation: Learner-Centred Outreach Support	26
• School Holiday Programme	27
• Child Protection Week	28
• Principals' Forum	29
• Youth Capacity-Building	30
• #Girlchat Unique and Positively YOU Girl's Camp	30
• Youth Action Workshops	31
• Gender-based violence webinar, CPU	32
• Mass media and social media	33
• Key Results (Infographic)	34
• Comprehensive Food Security Programme	35
• Key results (Infographic)	36
• Community-based kitchens	37
• Community Nutritional Development Centre (CNDC)	37
• Breakfast Programme Initiative	37
• Community Support and Skills Development	37
• Employment Readiness Programme	38
• International partnerships and advocacy	39
• Commission on the Status of Women 69	39
• ILITHA LABANTU SIDE EVENTS AT CSW69	40
• Pre-CSW70 Consultation	41
• Ilitha Labantu's "calls to action" (speaker + community friendly) (Infographic)	42

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Flagship and Legacy Events	43
• Ilitha Labantu Annual High Tea	43
• Second Edition Launch of Our Stories, Our Voices: From Pain to Power	44
• International Day of the Girl Child	45
• Mandisa Monakali Inaugural Lecture	46
• Men's Conference 2025	47
• Staff Development and Wellness	48
• Expanding and strengthening staff capacity	49
• Wellness Support	49
• Strategic Planning and Team-building	49
• Acknowledgements	50

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AWIF	African Women Independent Forum
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CBK(s)	Community-based kitchen(s)
CBO(s)	Community-based organisation(s)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CNDC	Community Nutritional Development Centre
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DSD	Department of Social Development
GBV	Gender-based violence
GBVF	Gender-based violence and Femicide
ILPF	Ilitha Labantu Principal's Forum
LPC	Legal Practice Council
MMS	Making Migration Safe for Women Programme
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisation(s)
PFDC	Provincial Food Distribution Centre
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAPS	South African Police Service
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence against women
VAWC	Violence against women and children
WROs	Women's Rights Organisations

OUR VISION

To assist in the elimination of all kinds of violence, especially those that occur in the domestic domain, where the ideology of privacy is strong.

OUR MISSION

We strive to end violence and abuse against women and children in disadvantaged communities. We provide emotional support, practical advice, education and training for coping with and addressing violence against women and children.

We utilise interactive and inclusive methodologies in our education and empowerment programmes..

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE

- **SERVING** all survivors of domestic violence and those supportive of them at any time, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, income, ability, religion, or geography
- Providing **TIMELY ACCESS** to services and programmes.
- Creating a **SAFE, WELCOMING, AND RESPECTFUL** environment where survivors and their families can heal and grow, working to end the silence surrounding violence against women and children, and ending the stigma found within our communities through outreach programs.
- **RAISING AWARENESS** about how societal acceptance of oppression relates to the incidence of sexual violence.
- Promoting a work environment that **EMPOWERS** each person to do their work to their fullest capacity; that supports each person in their efforts, and that inspires teamwork in order to provide the best service to the community. efforts, and that inspires teamwork to provide the best service to the community.





MESSAGE FROM

Ms Nkhabele Marumo

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

**Celebrating a legacy of tackling
violence against women and children**

It is my privilege to present this Annual Report on behalf of the Board of Ilitha Labantu for the period 1 March 2025 to 28 February 2026.

This reporting period has been marked by significant achievement and deepened responsibility. As a Board, we have observed with pride the organisation's continued ability to respond to the growing and complex realities of gender-based violence, while simultaneously strengthening its institutional capacity and strategic direction.

The scale of service delivery, reaching thousands of survivors through psychosocial support, legal services, and community-based interventions, reflects the relevance of Ilitha Labantu's work, and the trust that communities place in the organisation.

From a governance perspective, this year has been one of strengthening systems, ensuring accountability, and supporting sustainable growth. The Board has worked closely with the Executive Director and management team to ensure that the organisation remains responsive, compliant, and strategically positioned.

We are particularly encouraged by key institutional developments, including:

- Accreditation with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
- Progress toward registration with the Legal Practice Council (LPC)
- Securing of a multi-year funding partnership

The Board also recognises the importance of Ilitha Labantu's presence beyond service delivery. Through participation in national and global platforms, the organisation continues to elevate the voices and lived realities of the communities it serves.

We acknowledge that this progress has not come without challenges, including increased service demand, resource constraints, and systemic inefficiencies within the justice system. The Board remains committed to supporting the organisation in navigating these realities while safeguarding the quality and integrity of its work.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Executive Director, staff, donors and partners, and the communities we serve for their dedication and resilience.





MESSAGE FROM

Ms Ella Mangisa
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Continuing to build on a solid foundation rooted in resilience and service

The 2025–2026 reporting period has been one of intentional growth, reflection, and strategic repositioning for Ilitha Labantu.

As an organisation, we have moved beyond responding to cases as they arise and towards building a more integrated model of care. We have strengthened our approach to ensure that we walk the full journey with survivors, going beyond the initial point of contact to provide sustained, holistic support. This has required us to deepen our integration across departments, strengthen referral pathways, and ensure that every individual who engages with our services is heard and meaningfully supported toward safety, stability, and dignity.

Our work continues to evolve in response to the realities we encounter daily. We are increasingly engaging with cases that reflect the intersection of gender-based violence, poverty, mental health, and systemic inequality. These complexities have challenged us to think differently, act more strategically, and position Ilitha Labantu as a key contributor to broader systems change, influencing access to justice and long-term prevention efforts.

A critical part of this evolution has been our investment in institutional strengthening and capacity development. Over the past year, we have taken deliberate steps to build an organisation that is sustainable, responsive, and equipped to meet the demands of our work. This includes advancing our accreditation processes, strengthening our legal services, and enhancing our monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that our interventions are both impactful and accountable.

Central to this growth has been our continued investment in our people. Our staff are at the heart of Ilitha Labantu's work. Their commitment, resilience, and compassion define the quality of our services and the trust we have built within communities. Throughout this reporting period, we have prioritised staff development through accredited training and opportunities for professional growth. This investment is essential to strengthening organisational capacity while safeguarding the wellbeing of those who carry the weight of this work each day.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the entire Ilitha Labantu team. Your dedication to serving communities, often under challenging circumstances, is what gives life to our mission. You continue to embody the values and vision of our founder, Mandisa Monakali, whose legacy remains a guiding force in everything we do.

As we look ahead, we do so with clarity and purpose. Our focus remains on strengthening access to justice, expanding our reach to underserved communities, and ensuring that our work contributes to lasting, systemic change. We remain committed to a future where every survivor is supported, every voice is heard, and every community is empowered to stand against violence.



INTRODUCTION AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

While important gains have been made in policy and public awareness, violence against women and children (VAWC) remains one of South Africa's most urgent social crises. The 2025-2026 first and second quarter crime statistics revealed that more than 100 sexual offences are reported daily and nearly 200 rapes on school grounds were reported in the same period. These figures reflect the lived realities of many women and children who continued to experience persistent high levels of domestic and community-based violence often intensified by poverty, unemployment, and substance abuse.

For many survivors, pathways to support, safety, and justice remained complex and difficult to navigate. Underreporting of abuse is primarily driven by fear, stigma, and financial dependence, which limits access to protection and delays critical interventions. These dynamics reinforce cycles of violence and highlight the ongoing need for accessible, community-based services that prioritise survivor safety, dignity, and empowerment.

At a systemic level, South Africa's legislative framework to address GBV remains robust. However, the reporting period underscored the gap between policy and implementation. Survivors continue to encounter delays in policing, court processes, and access to social services, raising concerns about the effectiveness and responsiveness of existing systems. At the same time, sustained advocacy by civil society has kept GBV firmly on the national agenda, with growing emphasis on strengthening accountability, improving coordination across institutions, and ensuring that laws translate into meaningful protection for those most at risk.

The broader socio-economic environment has further shaped this context. High levels of unemployment, rising living costs, and widening inequality have placed increasing pressure on households, disproportionately affecting women. Economic exclusion remains a key driver of vulnerability, limiting the ability of many to leave abusive situations or rebuild independent lives. Concurrently, the economic cost of GBV, through its impact on health systems, productivity, and social stability, has become increasingly visible, reinforcing the need for comprehensive and sustained interventions.

Community experiences throughout the year reflected both the weight of these challenges and the strength of local resilience. In many areas, particularly under-resourced communities, violence and insecurity continue to shape daily life. Yet alongside this, there has been a strong and visible commitment from communities themselves to organise, advocate, and demand safer environments. Grassroots activism, local partnerships, and community-led initiatives have played a vital role in supporting survivors and holding institutions accountable.



Community experiences throughout the year reflected both the weight of these challenges and the strength of local resilience. In many areas, particularly under-resourced communities, violence and insecurity continue to shape daily life. Yet alongside this, there has been a strong and visible commitment from communities themselves to organise, advocate, and demand safer environments. Grassroots activism, local partnerships, and community-led initiatives have played a vital role in supporting survivors and holding institutions accountable.

Environmental pressures also emerged as an important factor during the reporting period. Severe weather events, including flooding and storms, disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, particularly those in informal settlements. The loss of shelter, livelihoods, and basic services heightened exposure to risk and compounded existing inequalities. These realities underscore the interconnected nature of social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities, and their cumulative impact on the safety and wellbeing of women and children.

At the same time, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of mental health within the GBV response. The psychological impact of violence, alongside broader social and economic stressors, continues to affect individuals and communities. Calls for stronger integration of psychosocial support into frontline services signal an important shift toward more holistic, survivor-centred approaches.

Despite these ongoing challenges, the period under review also reflects meaningful progress. Continued advocacy, growing public awareness, and strengthened collaboration between civil society and government have contributed to a more focused national response to GBV. Ilitha Labantu remained at the forefront of this work - providing essential services, building local capacity, and creating pathways to safety, healing, and empowerment.

The results in this report demonstrate that while the context remains complex and often difficult, sustained, community-rooted interventions coupled with national and global policy interventions are making a tangible difference. It is within this space, between persistent challenge and real progress, that Ilitha Labantu continues its work, committed to advancing dignity, equality, and lasting change in the lives of women and children.





PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

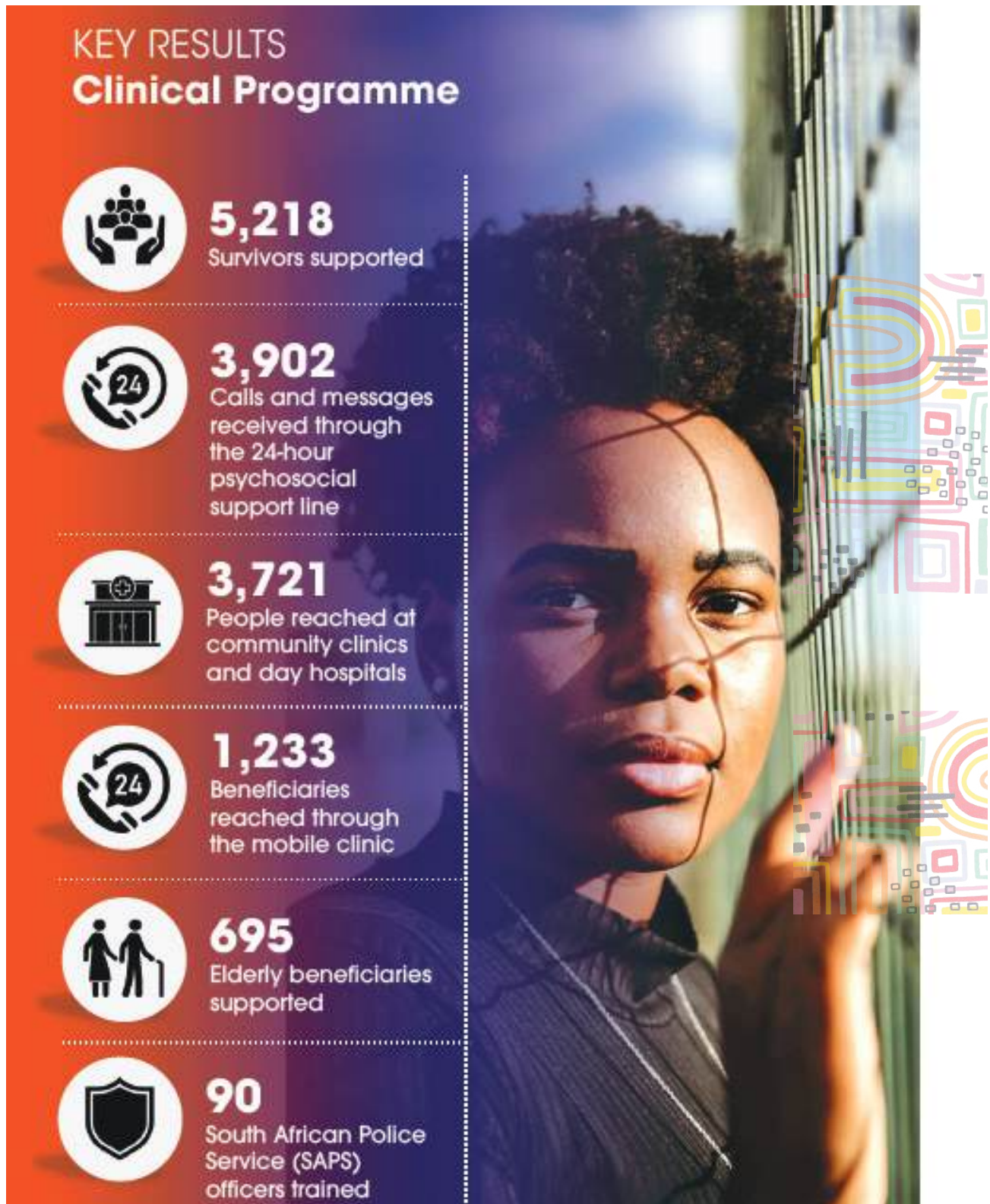
Ilitha Labantu's five programmatic areas - Clinical Programme, Policy and Advocacy, Outreach and Education, Employment Readiness and Comprehensive Food Security and Disaster Management work together to provide a holistic bundle of services to meet the needs of women and children affected by abuse and violence.

2025 - 2026 KEY RESULTS SNAPSHOT



CLINICAL PROGRAMME

The Clinical Programme remained central to Ilitha Labantu's response during the reporting period, providing survivor-centred psychosocial support to women and children affected by domestic violence, sexual violence, and child neglect. Services included counselling, crisis intervention, case management, psychological support, home visits, and referrals to external service providers. Many cases required integrated responses across the organisation's programmes, with close collaboration between the Clinical, Legal, and Outreach teams to ensure survivors received both emotional support and assistance in accessing protection and justice mechanisms. The clinical team also conducted talks at community clinics and day hospitals focused on domestic violence awareness; these engagements help community members recognise the early warning signs of abuse and encourage early help-seeking behaviour.





PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING

Demand for psychosocial support services continued to increase, reflecting the growing need for accessible, community-based support. In response, the Clinical Programme provided psychosocial support services to 5,218 survivors during the reporting period - an increase of 1,175 survivors compared to the previous year, exceeding the annual target of 5,000.

Referrals from the South African Police Service (SAPS), Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs), healthcare facilities, schools, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and community-based partners increased significantly during the year, alongside a steady number of walk-in clients seeking immediate assistance. Strengthened referral pathways and partnerships improved the identification of survivors and contributed to increased uptake of services, while the organisation's 24-hour psychosocial support lines in Gugulethu and Khayelitsha received 3,902 calls and messages, highlighting the ongoing demand for crisis response and accessible support pathways.

The mobile clinic programme formed an important part of this community-based response, extending psychosocial, clinical and referral services to underserved and remote areas where access to GBV support remains limited. During the reporting period, the mobile clinic reached 1,233 beneficiaries across Touwsrivier, Swellendam and Paarl, helping to reduce barriers such as transport costs, distance, and stigma. Integrated with the organisation's broader clinical, legal and outreach services, the mobile model strengthened continuity of care and enabled survivors to access holistic, survivor-centred support closer to their communities.

Clinical trends observed throughout the year pointed to the continued impact of poverty, unemployment, family instability, and prolonged exposure to violence on the mental health and wellbeing of women and children. These realities reinforced the importance of sustained psychosocial interventions that respond to immediate trauma while supporting long-term healing, recovery, and resilience.





IMPACT STORY - HEALING AND REBUILDING THROUGH HOLISTIC SUPPORT

After being brutally abused by her partner, Naledi* sought assistance from Ilitha Labantu's clinical department. At the initial consultation, she presented severe symptoms including memory loss, recurring head pain and significant emotional distress as she recounted the abuse. She was also assisted in opening a criminal case against the perpetrator and began attending court proceedings. Despite her trauma, Naledi remained committed to attending counselling sessions, accompanied by her son who had witnessed the incident and also received psychosocial support. Over time, she showed remarkable emotional progress, gaining confidence to speak about her experiences with greater strength and composure. In a powerful step toward healing and rebuilding her life, Naledi started volunteering at an elderly care home, providing support and care to others in her community. Naledi's story reflects the importance of sustained, holistic survivor support - encompassing psychosocial care, legal assistance, and support for affected family members - in helping survivors and their families move from trauma to healing and renewed purpose.

*Pseudonym used to protect survivor's identity





COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The Clinical Department strengthened its community-based capacity-building work through a range of structured interventions aimed at improving psychosocial wellbeing, strengthening family systems, and enhancing community response to gender-based violence (GBV) and related social challenges.

In response to gaps in parental engagement identified through the Learner Support Programme, the Department facilitated a Positive Parenting Workshop for parents, focusing on positive discipline, parent-child communication, adolescent behaviour, and emotional wellbeing. The sessions created space for reflection and shared learning, encouraging more constructive and nurturing approaches to parenting. The initiative is expected to strengthen family relationships and improve conflict resolution, leading to healthier home environments for children and adolescents.

The Department also continued its work with older persons through engagements at eight elderly clubs, reaching 695 beneficiaries during the year. These sessions combined psychosocial support with awareness raising on healthy lifestyle practices, while addressing key protection concerns such as elderly abuse, wills, and access to information and support services. The engagements provided opportunities for social connection, learning, and strengthened awareness of rights and available support systems.

In addition, the Department implemented First Responder Training to strengthen community-based response networks. The training equipped participants with practical skills to identify and respond to GBV, apply trauma-informed approaches, and ensure appropriate referral to relevant services. Together, these interventions reflect the Department's integrated approach to building community capacity, strengthening prevention, and improving access to psychosocial support across different population groups.





SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE TRAINING

Throughout the year, the Clinical Department held several training sessions for 90 police officers on Gender-based Violence, Gender Sensitivity, Trauma and Child Trauma, and Conflict Resolution and Mediation for SAPS members in the Garden Route District and Central Karoo District. These sessions formed part of an integrated capacity-building programme aimed at strengthening survivor-centred policing and improving frontline responses to violence against women and children (VAWC).

In the GBV training, participants engaged in interactive sessions and scenario-based learning to explore the root causes of GBV, reflect on systemic challenges, and develop practical approaches to improving justice and protection for survivors. Building on this, the gender sensitivity training focused on effective victim support mechanisms and practical strategies for dismantling systemic gender biases in law enforcement. Officers participated in collaborative problem-solving exercises and reflected on how gender-sensitive policing can strengthen community trust and improve GBV case handling.

The trauma and child trauma training placed strong emphasis on unpacking the complexities of trauma and its profound impact on survivors, families, and communities. Participants engaged in interactive learning that explored the psychological, emotional, and behavioural effects of trauma, while critically reflecting on how police responses can either compound or alleviate survivor distress.

In strengthening the prevention role of law enforcement, the conflict resolution and mediation training focused on the police mandate to reduce the risk of GBV by addressing disputes early and preventing situations from escalating into violence, while also reinforcing community trust and safety. Participants left equipped with the tools and commitment to foster a police service grounded in empathy, fairness, and accountability - a vital step towards safer communities, accountable law enforcement and an effective justice system.



POLICY AND ADVOCACY

We further strengthened our partnership with the South African Police Service (SAPS) by delivering workshops on GBV legislation and gender sensitivity, child trauma and trauma-informed response, basic counselling for victims of violence and the ethical handling of protection orders in two more districts, the Cape West Coast District and the Overberg District. These are not supplementary training sessions, they are essential interventions toward transforming institutions that routinely fail women.

KEY RESULTS

Policy and Advocacy



1,340

Clients reached for legal consultations (in-person and telephonic)



1,158

Applications for protection orders



16

Anti-bail pickets at magistrate courts



1,119

Interim protection orders granted



5

Policy submissions





CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

Across the reporting period, the Iiitha Labantu strengthened the capacity of a range of actors, equipping them with the legal knowledge, practical skills, and survivor-centred approaches needed to better protect and support survivors of gender-based violence.

Police officers from two districts received training on Legal Remedies and Usable Acts, with a focus on strengthening survivor-centred policing practices, improving understanding of applicable legislation, reinforcing appropriate referral and case-handling and improving inter-agency coordination. By building officers' understanding of their legal obligations and the realities survivors face, the training contributes to a more responsive and accountable justice system where survivors are more likely to be actively supported through the criminal justice process.

Staff from Community Cohesion, a fellow NGO working closely with a local community, received training on court processes and procedures focusing on sexual offences cases. The training emphasised the importance of ensuring that survivors leaving Thuthuzela Care Centres are provided with their case numbers, a seemingly small but critical step that enables follow-up with investigating officers and improved case tracking. This training deepened collaboration between the two organisations and strengthened referral pathways, meaning that more survivors will be informed and connected to legal assistance throughout their legal journey.

Iiitha Labantu facilitated a three-day capacity-building training for 23 Youth Facilitators from Manenberg People Centre. The participants, who work within school-based youth leadership and development initiatives, were capacitated through the Youth in Action methodology using the Iiitha Labantu Youth Facilitators Manual. The training aimed to strengthen facilitation competencies, enhance youth engagement practices, and equip facilitators with practical tools to support young leaders within their respective school communities.

Community leaders, frontline personnel, and civil society actors also participated in a two-day First Responder Training facilitated by a legal advisor and social worker from Iiitha Labantu. The training covered survivor-centred response protocols, legal obligations under domestic violence legislation, trauma-informed engagement, and coordination between community structures and formal justice systems. By equipping those who are often first on the scene, before police or social workers, with the tools to respond appropriately, this training extends Iiitha Labantu's reach and reinforces a broader community-based safety net for survivors.

By strengthening the capacity of law enforcement, frontline actors and community stakeholders, Iiitha Labantu continues to contribute to a more connected and coordinated support system for survivors throughout their engagement with the justice process.

Blurb: Lasting change in the lives of survivors requires a wider ecosystem of informed and coordinated actors.





PICKETING AND ANTI-BAIL CAMPAIGN

Throughout the year, Ilitha Labantu led and participated in 16 picketing actions at magistrate courts to oppose bail for the accused in GBV cases. These gatherings demonstrated solidarity with the victim's family and reflected broader community demands for accountability. Public advocacy efforts such as these play an important role in strengthening public confidence in justice processes and encouraging active civic participation.





MAKING MIGRATION SAFE FOR WOMEN PROGRAMME

Ilitha Labantu participated in the Making Migration Safe for Women (MMS) programme led by UN Women. The programme seeks to strengthen the protection, rights, and wellbeing of women migrating to, from, and through South Africa.

Ilitha Labantu supported migrant and host community women affected by gender-based violence by expanding access to counselling, trauma support, and case management services. The organisation also facilitated community dialogues that brought together organisations and community leaders working with migrant women, including those focused on skills development, legal assistance, psychosocial support, and community integration. The sessions, which centred on safety, dignity, identity, and access to support services, were an important avenue to promote social cohesion, inclusion, and greater understanding between migrant and host communities. The discussions also created a platform to share experiences and strengthen collaboration across service providers, while deepening dialogue on belonging and the lived realities of migrant women. Ilitha Labantu emphasised that many migrant women do not report abuse due to fear, language barriers, or uncertainty around their legal rights. By creating safe spaces for open dialogue, the organisation encouraged community members and survivors to speak about violence, trafficking, and economic exploitation linked to migration.

Through the MMS programme, Ilitha Labantu reinforced the message that migration itself is not the cause of harm; rather, vulnerability is driven by gaps in protection, information, and coordinated support systems, and called for stronger community awareness, responsive institutions, and approaches that place human rights at the centre of all interventions.

Blurb: Migration itself is not the cause of harm; rather, vulnerability is driven by gaps in protection, information, and coordinated support systems.



IMPACT STORY - RESTORING SAFETY AND PROTECTION FOR MIGRANT SURVIVORS

Jeanette* had been living in an abusive and violent marriage. When she managed to escape her partner, she discovered that her asylum visa had been revoked during the period she was fleeing the abuse. The loss of documentation placed her at immediate risk of arrest, detention, and further victimisation, and threatened her access to essential services, employment, and stability for her three children and elderly mother.

Ilitha Labantu intervened by providing urgent support, including facilitating immediate engagement with relevant authorities, documenting the context of the abuse to explain the lapse to the Refugee Office, and supporting her reinstatement into the asylum system. The organisation also assisted in securing updated documentation, reconnecting her to essential services, and obtaining a protection order. This coordinated intervention helped restore safety, stability, and a sense of security for Jeanette and her family.

*Pseudonym used to protect survivor's identity

SUBMISSIONS

In advancing systemic change, Ilitha Labantu contributed to national policy and legislative reform processes aimed at strengthening rights, protection, and access to justice for vulnerable communities. Drawing on evidence and insights from its frontline community-based programmes, the organisation made a series of submissions to influence policies affecting women, children, migrants, and civil society organisations, while advancing more inclusive and rights-based approaches to governance and social protection.

Ilitha Labantu made submissions on the following policy documents:

- **Review of the Criminal Justice System: Review of South Africa's Bail System** - directly linked to strengthening enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 and the Victims Charter, with specific recommendations to improve bail conditions, survivor notification, and accountability mechanisms for perpetrators.
- **Draft White Paper on Immigration, Citizenship and Refugee Protection** - highlighting vulnerabilities of migrant women and the need for inclusive access to GBV protection mechanisms, in alignment with the Victims Charter and broader human rights protections.

Looking ahead, Ilitha Labantu is preparing a submission on the Domestic Violence Amendment Act. As an early step in this process, the organisation has begun engaging community members, including through a session in January 2026 at the Gugulethu Public Library, to ensure that frontline voices and lived experiences directly inform its advocacy.





OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The Outreach and Education Department continued its prevention-focused work through community mobilisation and school-based programming. The department coordinated the #Uthuleleni Anti-GBVF Motorcade in partnership with Gugulethu SAPS and facilitated engagements with schools through the Safe Schools Leadership Collaborative Project. Emerging trends from school engagements highlighted concerns related to bullying, substance abuse exposure, teenage pregnancy, behavioural challenges among learners, and indicators of child neglect.



POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY COMMUNITY

KEY RESULTS



Population breakdown by community

KHAYELITSHA (*Harare & Makhaza zones*)

391,749 residents

PHILIPPI (*Nyanga & South zones*)

191,025 residents

DELFT

182,143 residents

GUGULETHU

151,016 residents

HOUT BAY (*Nomzamo zone*)

40,432 residents

TOUWS RIVER

8,125 residents



KEY RESULTS

Outreach and Education



10

Anti-GBVF motorcades and awareness campaigns



215,000

Households reached through awareness campaigns



21

Schools visited



15,140

Learners reached



8,793,433

People reached through mass media



1,047,491

Views and impressions on social media



ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIVITIES

THE #UTHULELENI ANTI-GBVF

The #Uthuleleni Anti-GBVF Campaign continued to serve as a visible and community-driven platform for raising awareness, mobilising collective action, and strengthening local responses to gender-based violence and femicide across urban, peri-urban, and rural communities. Through a series of motorcades and outreach activities, the campaign brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including SAPS, Community Policing Forums (CPFs), the Department of Social Development (DSD), local councillors, community leaders, civil society organisations, and residents. These partnerships strengthened community participation and reinforced the message that preventing GBV requires a coordinated, society-wide response. Across the various engagements, thousands of pamphlets were distributed to increase awareness of GBV prevention, survivor rights, and available support services, helping community members better understand where and how to access assistance.

The campaign also played an important role in extending awareness and support to underserved and remote communities, including areas such as Touwsriver, where access to information and services is often limited. Two major motorcades were organised in response to high-profile femicide cases, including the killings of Ayesha Unam Mamfanya and Nosiphiwo Sheila Dosi, creating spaces for public solidarity, remembrance, and collective calls for accountability. Additionally during Human Rights Month in March, Ilitha Labantu, conducted a women's rights and community safety awareness day in partnership with SAPS Nyanga, Amandla Development, and the Department of Social Development, reaching hundreds of households.

Through these mobilisations, #Uthuleleni continued to amplify community voices, challenge the normalisation of violence, and encourage greater reporting of abuse and engagement with local support structures.



TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

On 28 November, as part of the 16 Days of Activism, Ilitha Labantu hosted its annual Take Back the Night march under the theme "Reclaiming Our Streets." This public stand against violence toward women and children brought together close to 500 community members, SAPS officers, faith leaders, activists, and supporters. Walking after dark challenged the notion that women must alter their behaviour to stay safe, instead placing responsibility on society to confront and prevent violence. The march symbolised the reclaiming of public spaces too often feared after nightfall. As a visible act of collective resistance, solidarity and remembrance, it reinforced that violence cannot be normalised, and that true progress will only be realised when women, children, and all vulnerable persons are free from abuse and discrimination.

Blurb: Walking after dark challenged the notion that women must alter their behaviour to stay safe, instead placing responsibility on society to confront and prevent violence.



LEARNER-CENTRED SUPPORT PROGRAMME

SCHOOL VISITATION: LEARNER-CENTRED OUTREACH SUPPORT

Ilitha Labantu's Learner-Centred Outreach Support (Schools Visitation Programme) was developed for primary and secondary school learners, particularly children living in communities where violence and abuse have become normalised. The programme seeks to educate learners on gender-based violence, children's rights, and related social issues, while also strengthening access to the organisation's holistic support services within school communities. During the reporting period, the programme reached 15,140 learners across 21 schools.

Through school-based engagements, learners participated in interactive sessions on issues affecting their wellbeing, including understanding and preventing teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, self-esteem, healthy decision-making, and the importance of education. The sessions created safe and open spaces for learners to ask questions, reflect on personal experiences, and engage in guided discussions on the social pressures and risks facing young people. By encouraging dialogue and participatory learning, the programme strengthened awareness, built confidence among learners to make informed choices, and contributed to safer and more supportive schools.



SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

During the 2025 school holidays, Ilitha Labantu's Outreach and Education Department, in partnership with the Gugulethu Public Library, ran structured violence prevention programmes for children and youth. Held from 31 March to 4 April, 1 to 4 July, and 6 to 10 October 2025, the sessions together engaged approximately 300 participants aged 8 to 17 from the Gugulethu community. The sessions focused on promoting awareness, strengthening protective behaviours, and equipping participants with knowledge and skills to contribute to safer communities.

The programme provided a safe, constructive space where children explored personal safety through interactive discussions, storytelling, and games. Participants learned to recognise different forms of violence, understand bodily autonomy and boundaries, and know how and where to report abuse. The activities were designed to build confidence through open dialogue, and strengthen children's awareness of their rights - ultimately increasing their ability to identify risk, respond appropriately, and seek help when needed.

Blurb: By empowering children today, Ilitha Labantu is contributing to a future generation of confident leaders who will advocate for a society where every child, regardless of background, is protected, valued, and treated with dignity.



CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

As part of National Child Protection Week 2025, Ilitha Labantu's Outreach and Education team conducted targeted awareness sessions across Khayelitsha and Gugulethu, engaging children on their rights and the importance of protection from abuse. The team visited Chuma Primary School and Iyabinga ECD Centre in Khayelitsha, where learners were supported to understand their fundamental rights, recognise different forms of abuse, and identify pathways to access help and support services.

In a complementary engagement, the team also visited Tembaletu LSEN School in Gugulethu, which supports learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs. This session placed emphasis on inclusive child protection, reinforcing that every child, regardless of ability, has the right to safety, dignity, and protection in all environments, including at home, at school, and within their communities.

Across both engagements, the programme highlighted the importance of speaking out against abuse and equipped children with foundational knowledge to better understand and respond to risk. These activities form part of Ilitha Labantu's broader prevention efforts, aimed at strengthening awareness, promoting early reporting, and reinforcing the shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities to create safe, supportive environments where children's rights are upheld.



PRINCIPALS' FORUM

Another key achievement during the reporting period was the presentation of the Behaviour Modification Programme at the first Ilitha Labantu Principals' Forum (ILPF) of 2026. Established as a structured platform for school principals to address gender-based violence (GBV) within educational institutions, the forum supports collaboration on effective interventions while promoting the welfare, safety, and empowerment of women and children. Convened quarterly, the ILPF creates opportunities for school leadership to engage on emerging social challenges affecting learners and school communities, while strengthening partnerships between schools and community-based support services.

The presentation of the Behaviour Modification Programme was well received and created opportunities for buy-in, collaboration, and engagement from participating schools where the programme will be implemented. The session also reinforced the importance of early intervention and coordinated responses in addressing behavioural challenges, violence, and learner wellbeing within school environments.



YOUTH CAPACITY-BUILDING

#GIRLCHAT UNIQUE AND POSITIVELY YOU GIRL'S CAMP

The #GirlsChat Follow-Up Camp 2025, held in June at the Simonsberg Christian Centre, brought together 60 girls aged 13 - 16 from Ilitha Labantu programmes, partner organisations, and local communities. Under the theme "Rooted & Rising: My Power, My Purpose," the four-day camp aimed to support adolescent girls navigating vulnerability to gender-based violence, social pressures, and developmental challenges.

Through a structured programme of group discussions, creative expression, outdoor activities, and skills-building sessions, participants engaged on topics such as self-awareness, confidence, leadership, public speaking, and resilience. The camp provided a safe, supportive space for reflection and connection, with facilitators using trauma-informed approaches to guide discussions and manage emotional risks.

The outcomes were significant. Participants demonstrated increased self-confidence, improved communication skills, and greater self-awareness. Many girls reported feeling more empowered to make decisions, set boundaries, and articulate their goals. The camp also strengthened peer support networks, fostering a sense of sisterhood and belonging, while creative and group-based activities enabled girls to process experiences and express themselves constructively.

Blurb: Many girls reported feeling more empowered to make decisions, set boundaries, and articulate their goals. The camp also strengthened peer support networks, fostering a sense of sisterhood and belonging.



YOUTH ACTION WORKSHOPS

As part of its youth empowerment and prevention work, Ilitha Labantu facilitated youth leadership and capacity-building engagements, bringing together young people aged 18 - 25 to strengthen their role in addressing GBV in their communities. The sessions created a platform for participants to engage critically on GBV prevention, leadership, and community-based responses, while building practical skills for action.

Participants explored key themes including power dynamics, masculinity, peer influence, consent, and healthy relationships. Through facilitated discussions, dialogue circles, and creative learning methods, young people reflected on harmful social norms and the role they can play in shifting attitudes that perpetuate violence. The programme also strengthened their ability to identify GBV, respond appropriately, and promote peer-led prevention and referral pathways.

The workshops provided a safe and supportive environment for young people to engage critically on violence in their communities while building confidence, agency, and collective responsibility. Key outcomes included improved understanding of GBV and its root causes, strengthened leadership and response capacity, and increased readiness to act as advocates for change within their peer networks. Participants also developed a GBV Action Charter, capturing their shared commitments to non-violence and outlining practical actions for promoting safety, dignity, respect and justice in their communities. By centering youth voices and leadership, the initiative contributes to a growing movement of young advocates and activists ready to lead in the fight against GBV.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE WEBINAR, CPUT

Ilitha Labantu conducted a GBV workshop with first-year Operations Management students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in October 2025, providing a critical lens on GBV in South Africa and within the higher education sector. The session created an inclusive platform to challenge gender inequalities, foster ubuntu, and cultivate a new generation of leaders committed to advancing gender equality. These sessions form part of the organisation's ongoing efforts to actively address the scourge of GBV at institutions of higher learning.



MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

During the reporting period, Ilitha Labantu proactively sought and secured significant media coverage across major print, broadcast, and digital platforms. This strategic engagement amplified the organisation's advocacy, strengthened its public profile, and positioned Ilitha Labantu as a leading voice on gender-based violence, women's rights, and child protection. By actively leveraging media opportunities, including consistent storytelling and campaign visibility, the organisation influenced national discourse constructively. This exposure broadened its advocacy reach, reinforced public awareness, and demonstrated Ilitha Labantu's ongoing commitment to driving positive change.





Mass Media and Social Media Reach



PRINT AND DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS

70 articles published

PLATFORMS:

Cape Times, Cape Argus, Weekend Argus, Vukani, City Vision, Daily Voice, Daily Maverick, News24, Eyewitness News

5,676,942
READERS



RADIO BROADCASTING AND ADVOCACY

17 Live broadcast interviews

STATIONS:

- Heart 104.9 FM
- Smile 90.4 FM
- Cape Talk 567 AM
- Bush Radio
- Zibonele FM,
- Radio 786



593,000
LISTENERS

Via two interviews on SAfm



1,476,000
LISTENERS

Via 15 appearances on regional stations



SOCIAL MEDIA

1,047,491 Multi-platform engagements



900,000

Total Facebook video and post views



60,000

Timeline impressions on X



45,000

Unique Instagram user accounts reached



15,256

Verified followers (combined digital follower network)

FOLLOWER BREAKDOWN:

- Facebook (13,001)
- X (1,279)
- Instagram (976)



COMPREHENSIVE FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

The 2025–2026 financial year unfolded amid deepening socio-economic pressures across South Africa, with rising food prices, unemployment, and the increasing cost of living placing severe strain on vulnerable households. In this environment, Ilitha Labantu's Comprehensive Food Security Programme played an essential role in sustaining families and strengthening community resilience through its Provincial Food Distribution Centre (PFDC). More than a food relief initiative, the programme has become a vital community support system that addresses hunger while also creating pathways toward dignity, participation, and long-term wellbeing.



KEY RESULTS

KEY RESULTS

Comprehensive Food Security



35

Active community-based kitchens



Food parcels distributed



5,000

Meals served daily

235

To Phillippi residents monthly *(for 3 months)*

200

CNDC beneficiaries



COMMUNITY-BASED KITCHENS

A major accomplishment during the reporting period was the expansion and strengthening of the Community-Based Kitchen (CBK) network to 35 active sites. Together the kitchens provide 5,000 meals daily to those most in need and serve as important local hubs where meals, care, and community solidarity intersect. The programme adopted a flexible distribution model that included both prepared meals and food parcels, allowing support to be adapted according to local realities and seasonal needs. During the December holiday closure period for example, food parcels were distributed to beneficiaries and their families to ensure households were not left without support at a particularly vulnerable time.

COMMUNITY NUTRITIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (CNDC)

The CNDC programme continued to operate actively within Gugulethu, serving as an important and accessible point of daily nutritional support for community members facing extreme socio-economic hardship. For many beneficiaries, the programme represented a critical source of consistent daily nourishment and social support.

The kitchens served not only as food distribution points, but also as safe and trusted community spaces where care, dignity, solidarity, and human connection intersected. The programme adopted a flexible distribution model that included both prepared meals and food parcel distribution, allowing support interventions to be adapted according to local realities, emergencies, and seasonal needs.

BREAKFAST PROGRAMME INITIATIVE

Recognising the increasing levels of hunger and nutritional vulnerability within the community, Ilitha Labantu also introduced a breakfast support initiative aimed at assisting some of the programme's most vulnerable beneficiaries. The breakfast programme sought to provide an additional layer of nutritional support, particularly for individuals who often arrived at programme sites without having had access to a morning meal.

This intervention contributed toward improving daily nutritional intake, promoting dignity, and supporting the physical and emotional wellbeing of beneficiaries accessing services through the programme.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The programme also deepened its developmental focus by integrating skills development, nutrition awareness, and community engagement activities into its food security work. These initiatives sought to strengthen confidence, participation, and self-reliance among beneficiaries while recognising that food insecurity is closely linked to broader social and economic exclusion. Additional outreach included targeted food parcel support for women-led households and strengthened collaboration with community organisations and the Department of Social Development.

Beyond providing immediate relief, the initiative created opportunities for meaningful engagement and strengthened relationships within the community. Through facilitated sessions, community members were provided with safe spaces to connect, share lived experiences, and strengthen collective responses to grief, abuse, and broader social challenges. The dialogues encouraged reflection and shared problem-solving, highlighting the importance of community-led care and resilience. These practical support interventions help reduce social stress while building trust and collective responsibility within communities.



EMPLOYMENT READINESS PROGRAMME

Ilitha Labantu continued its investment in survivor empowerment and economic resilience through Building Bridges, the organisation’s holistic skills development and employment readiness programme. During the 2025–2026 period, 40 women were recruited into the Nail Technician Programme. Designed to provide practical pathways toward economic independence, the three- to four-month courses equip participants with marketable skills while supporting confidence-building and self-reliance as part of their broader healing journeys. Upon completion, participants received their starter kits and certificates to support income generation and employment opportunities.

A significant milestone during the year was Ilitha Labantu’s successful registration as an academy with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). This achievement marks an important step in formalising and accrediting the organisation’s training programmes, boosting the long-term value and recognition of the skills women acquire through the initiative. Going forward, participants who complete the courses will receive formal qualifications, further enhancing employability and expanding opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 69

Ilitha Labantu participated in the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), contributing to global discussions on gender equality, survivor-centred approaches, and the ongoing implementation of the Beijing Declaration. Through two side events, the organisation highlighted the importance of grassroots activism, trauma-informed care, and collective action in advancing justice and support for survivors of gender-based violence.



ILITHA LABANTU SIDE EVENTS AT CSW69

LEGACY OF ACTION: ADVANCING THE BEIJING +30 DECLARATION TO COMBAT GBV IN AFRICA AND HONOURING MANDISA MONAKALI

Held on 13 March 2025, this side event reflected on the continued relevance of the Beijing Declaration while honouring the legacy of Ilitha Labantu founder, Mandisa Monakali. The session brought together regional and international voices to examine the link between global gender equality commitments and grassroots activism, while highlighting the role of community-led interventions in addressing GBV across Africa. It was also an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of the late Mandisa Monakali, whose pioneering efforts contributed significantly to integrating the principles of the Beijing Declaration into the South African and African contexts.

Dr. Sindy Zamura-Bernard outlined the intersection of historical struggles and contemporary gender justice efforts, underscoring that Ilitha Labantu remains a living testament to resilience, grassroots activism, and institutional change. In opening remarks, Ella Monakali-Mangisa, Executive Director of Ilitha Labantu, highlighted the urgency of action beyond reflection. She stressed that 30 years after the Beijing Declaration, GBV, discrimination, and exclusion persist, calling for a shift from commitment to real, systemic change. Ms Monakali-Mangisa also reflected on Mandisa Monakali's lifelong dedication to systemic change, ensuring that laws protected women, survivors received essential services, and justice became a lived reality.

Other speakers included Dr Nthabiseng Sepanya-Mogale who focused on how Ilitha Labantu serves as a case model of survival against systemic challenges; Dr Litha Musyimi-Ogana who spoke about the Women Peace Trail and its role in ensuring that pioneers like Mandisa Monakali are remembered for their impact; and Reverend Dionne Boissiere who reflected on grief as a teacher and offered a profound perspective on loss, resilience, and justice.

Dr Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda Deputy Executive Director (DED) of UN Women delivered the closing remarks, emphasising that Mandisa Monakali's legacy is a movement that must continue to shape policies, programmes, and grassroots interventions. She reinforced the importance of continued solidarity and cross-regional collaboration, urging tangible pathways for justice and community-rooted interventions.

HEALING TOGETHER: ADVANCING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT

Ilitha Labantu hosted a second side event on 14 March centred on trauma-informed care for GBV survivors. Despite the global recognition of the Beijing Declaration's survivor-centered approach, significant gaps persist in the implementation of comprehensive support systems. As part of the Beijing +30 agenda, the session underscored the critical need for trauma-informed approaches to advance gender equality and eradicate systemic violence.

Ella Monakali-Mangisa, Executive Director of Ilitha Labantu, who opened and moderated the session, emphasised that trauma-informed care is an essential framework for fostering healing, resilience, and empowerment, while dismantling the systemic barriers that perpetuate gender-based violence (GBV) and inequality. Hon Sindisiwe Chikunga, Minister of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, South Africa, delivered the keynote address where she addressed the widespread impact of trauma, noting its presence in various spheres of society, such as schools, workplaces, and homes. The recommendations made during this session will guide policy advocacy and efforts to provide comprehensive, supportive responses to GBV.



PRE-CSW70 CONSULTATION

Ilitha Labantu convened a civil society consultative meeting in January 2026 to inform South Africa’s national position ahead of the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70). The consultation brought together civil society organisations, legal experts, and oversight bodies to assess progress and persistent gaps in access to justice for women and girls, with a focus on aligning national commitments with lived realities in the justice system.

Participants, including representatives from Ilitha Labantu, Lawyers for Human Rights, and the Commission for Gender Equality, discussed the gap between South Africa’s strong legislative framework and its uneven implementation. Key challenges included delayed investigations and court processes, inconsistent police first-response services, weak intersectoral coordination, and limited survivor information rights. These systemic failures often result in secondary victimisation, particularly for rural women, migrants, persons with disabilities, and children. Concerns were also raised about the “weaponisation” of legal processes against survivors, including counter-charges and procedural delays that undermine access to justice and protection. Recommendations focused on enforceable accountability mechanisms, improved coordination between justice, health and social services, trauma-informed and survivor-centred approaches, and addressing forensic and case-processing delays. Additional priorities included safeguarding survivor information rights and ensuring equitable access to justice for marginalised groups.

The consultation underscored that South Africa’s central challenge does not stem from an absence of laws, but is rather the result of weak accountability and implementation. Therefore, the country’s engagement at CSW70 must move beyond highlighting legislative progress toward committing to measurable reforms that ensure survivors and victims experience meaningful access to justice in practice.

ENSURING AND STRENGTHENING
ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS, INCLUDING BY
PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE LEGAL SYSTEMS, ELIMINATING
DISCRIMINATORY LAWS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES, AND ADDRESSING
STRUCTURAL BARRIERS.

Pre-Commission on the Status of Women 70th session -
Virtual Civil Society Consultative Meeting.

DATE: 15 JANUARY 2026 **TIME:** 10:00 - 12:30 **PLATFORM:** Teams

LIVE **VIRTUAL MEETING**
@ilithalabantu **TEAMS**

PANELISTS

MS SIMNIKIWE MABOEE
 Senior Legal Advisor, Ilitha Labantu

ADV NTHABISENG SEPANYA - MOGALE
 Commission on Gender Equality South Africa

MS KAYAN LEUNG
 Head of Programme, Strategic Litigation Programme/
 Gender Equality Programme Lawyers for Human Rights

ADV KAGISO MAPHALLE
 Ilitha Labantu Board Secretary
MODERATOR

the doj & cd
 Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
 Department of Justice and Constitutional Development

ILITHA LABANTU
 PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT PEOPLE

AWIF
 African Women's International Forum

UN Commission on the Status of Women





ILITHA LABANTU'S "CALLS TO ACTION"

1. **Believe** survivors at first contact.
2. **Explain** rights and processes in plain language.
3. **Protect** survivors immediately and consistently (bail, protection orders, safety plans).
4. **Coordinate** services so that survivors do not navigate the system alone.
5. **Make accountability real** - no more blame shifting.
6. **Justice** must reach rural women, migrants, undocumented people, and women with disabilities.
7. **Resource** the frontline - community and civil society support saves lives.



FLAGSHIP AND LEGACY EVENTS

ILITHA LABANTU ANNUAL HIGH TEA

Ilitha Labantu hosted its 6th Annual High Tea Fundraiser on 30 August 2025 under the theme “Her Legacy, Our Purpose: 36 Years of Action and Impact.” The event served as both a celebration of the gains made as an organisation in the fight against GBV and a moment of reflection on the ongoing struggle and the urgent responsibility to protect and uphold the rights and dignity of women and children. Speakers included Deputy Minister of Employment and Labour, Judith Nema-dzinga-Tshabalala; Miss World South Africa 1st Runner-Up, Nande Mabalala; CEO of WDB Trust, Riah Phiyega; and Musician and Songwriter, Khanyo Maphumulo.

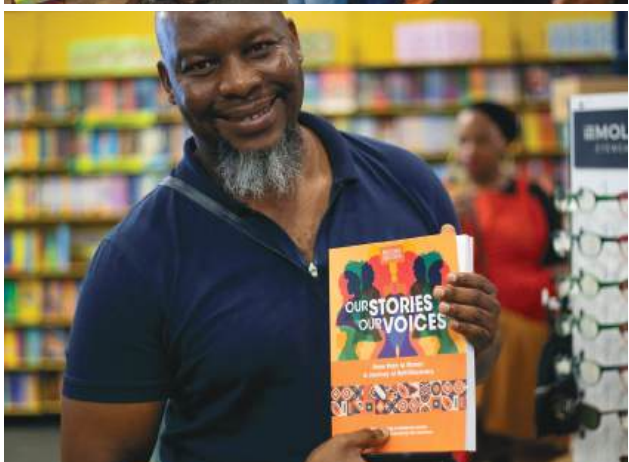
The High Tea paid tribute to the enduring legacy of the organisation’s late founder, Mandisa Monakali, whose vision continues to shape and guide its work. Her commitment to community empowerment and justice remains central to Ilitha Labantu’s mission. Funds raised through the high tea support the Dorothy Zihlangu Transitional House, which provides a safe and supportive environment for women survivors of GBV and their children. victims experience meaningful access to justice in practice.



SECOND EDITION LAUNCH OF OUR STORIES, OUR VOICES: FROM PAIN TO POWER

Ilitha Labantu launched the second edition of its anthology series, *Our Stories, Our Voices: From Pain to Power – A Journey of Self-Discovery*, on Heritage Day, 24 September 2025, at Exclusive Books, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town. The collection brings together deeply personal stories, poetry, and reflections by eight women from across Sub-Saharan Africa who have used the written word to transform pain into courage and struggle into triumph. Within its pages are testimonies of women who participated in the liberation struggle, survivors who endured violence and injustice, and visionaries who continue to shape the present. Each contribution stands as a testament to resilience, remembrance, and the power of women reclaiming their voices.

The anthology emerged from the Isisele Senyathi Women’s Hub on African Women’s History, an initiative dedicated to celebrating women’s achievements, preserving untold histories, and recognising the communities that shaped them. In continuing the legacy of the organisation’s late founder, Mandisa Monakali, the anthology creates space for women’s lived experiences to be documented and shared. As part of a growing living archive, it honours the voices and struggles of past generations and inspires future generations to speak, write, and lead with courage.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

In observation of the International Day of the Girl Child, Ilitha Labantu hosted the #GirlChat at the Southern Sun Hotel, bringing together over 60 girls from across Cape Town to celebrate their power, resilience, and leadership. Guided by the theme "The girl I am, the change I lead: Girls on the frontlines of crisis," the programme provided a space for young girls to engage in meaningful dialogue, reflect on their identities, and share their aspirations for the future. The #GirlChat is an ongoing programme designed to provide a long-term support structure for participating girls. It aims to accompany them through their personal development and leadership journeys, while fostering a community of peer support, growth, and empowerment.



MANDISA MONAKALI INAUGURAL LECTURE

In November 2025, Ilitha Labantu, in partnership with the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice, hosted the Mandisa Monakali Inaugural Lecture at the University of the Western Cape Library Auditorium in Bellville. Delivered by Hon. Thandi Modise under the theme "From Grassroots to Global: The Enduring Impact of Mandisa Monakali's Activism in Advancing Women's Rights," the event reflected on Ms Monakali's lifelong contribution to gender equality and her lasting influence on social justice movements at both national and international levels.

Held at the start of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign, the event highlighted the importance of leadership, advocacy, and sustained collective action in addressing gender-based violence. It also reaffirmed Ilitha Labantu's continued commitment to advancing women's rights and building on the legacy of grassroots activism championed by its founder.



MEN'S CONFERENCE 2025

Ilitha Labantu, together with Community Cohesion, The Character Company and the Western Cape Department of Social Development, hosted a Men's Conference from 9-10 December 2025 at Bertha House, Mowbray.

Bringing together men, practitioners and sector leaders from across the Western Cape, the closed-session conference created a dedicated space for critical engagement on the social realities shaping men's lives, including the pressures, expectations and contradictions embedded within contemporary masculinities. These dynamics continue to influence behaviour, interpersonal conduct and the broader patterns of harm that emerge in society.

Anchored in the theme Acknowledge Realities: Awareness to Action, the conference invited participants to reflect on their own experiences while interrogating the norms, narratives and conditions that give rise to men's agency and vulnerability. It was a platform for honest discourse, thoughtful analysis and the collective exploration of how men can contribute meaningfully to shifting harmful norms and advancing a more accountable and equitable society.

The two-day programme included dialogue sessions, workshops and thematic discussions culminating in the development and signing of a Men's Charter for Community Cohesion and Positive Masculinity, a shared commitment toward sustained and intentional action.



STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND WELLNESS

The 2025–2026 financial year underscored the resilience of Ilitha Labantu’s staff and the increasing pressures faced by frontline organisations responding to VAWC and broader socio-economic distress. As demand for services grew, the organisation prioritised strengthening staff capacity, enhancing internal collaboration, and investing in staff wellbeing to ensure sustainable and quality service delivery.



EXPANDING AND STRENGTHENING STAFF CAPACITY

Ilitha Labantu expanded its operational capacity through the recruitment of additional personnel across legal, psychosocial, monitoring and evaluation, finance, and community development functions. The organisation also hosted social work and psychology interns, contributing to skills development within the sector while strengthening programme delivery. Several lay counsellors and youth leaders transitioned into volunteer and staff roles, reinforcing continuity from within communities and strengthening the organisation's community-rooted approach. These additions enhanced Ilitha Labantu's multidisciplinary model and improved its ability to provide integrated services to vulnerable individuals and households.

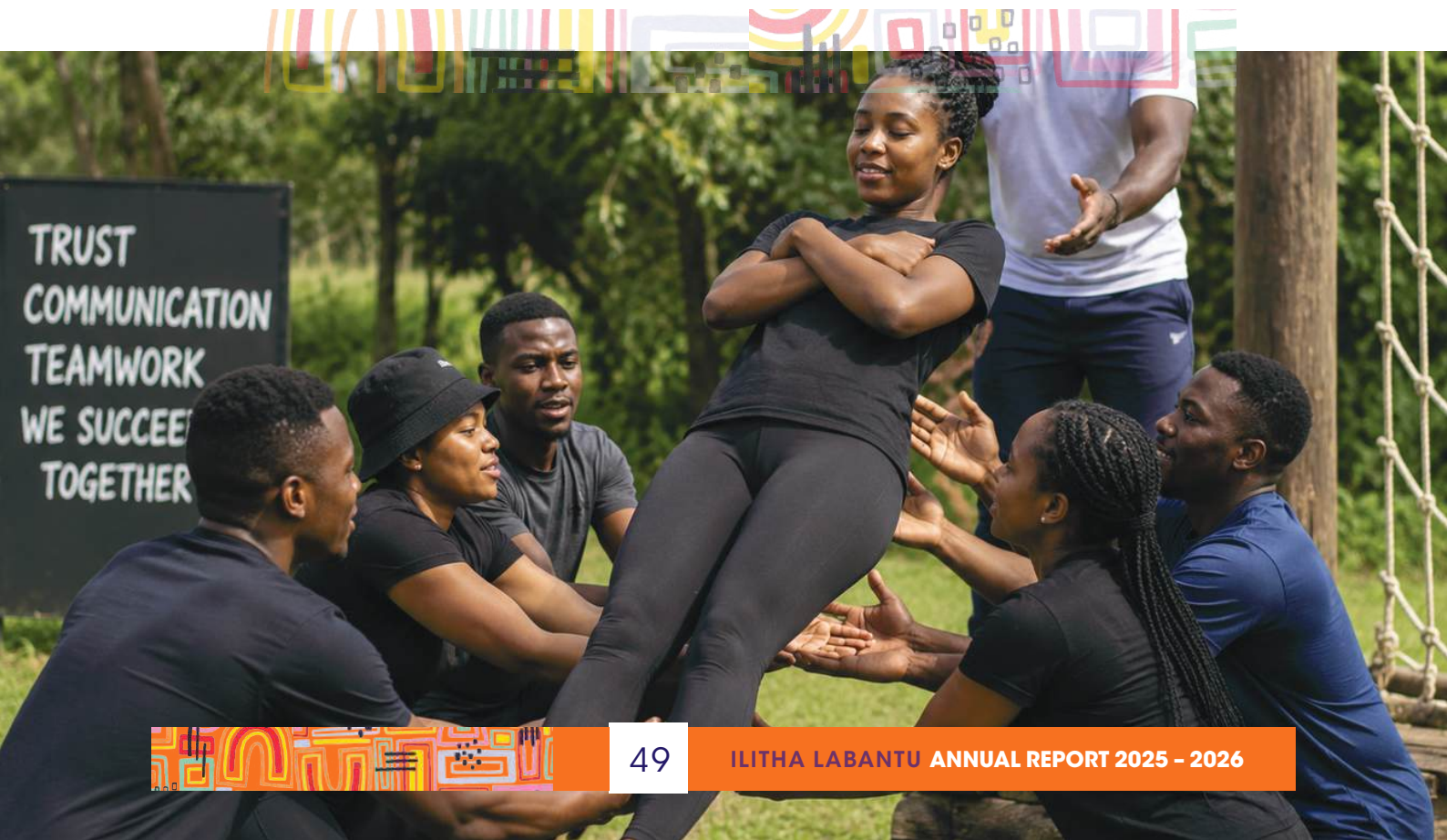
WELLNESS SUPPORT

At the same time, the organisation recognised the emotional toll associated with frontline GBV and community-based work. Increasingly complex cases, many linked to severe trauma and socio-economic hardship, placed considerable pressure on staff and available resources. In response, Ilitha Labantu strengthened internal support mechanisms through regular debriefing sessions, peer support structures, professional supervision, and cross-training between legal and psychosocial teams. These interventions aimed to reduce burnout, strengthen organisational resilience, and ensure that staff remained equipped to provide compassionate and effective care under demanding conditions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TEAM-BUILDING

A critical juncture during the year was the staff strategic planning workshop and team-building held in January 2026. The sessions created space for reflection, relationship building, and renewed organisational alignment following an intense period of service delivery. Staff engaged in facilitated discussions and exercises focused on organisational culture, professional relationships, and the importance of collaboration across departments. The process resulted in renewed commitments to stronger interdepartmental coordination, particularly between clinical and legal teams, and more structured internal communication and information-sharing mechanisms. Team-building activities further strengthened trust, morale, and cohesion across the organisation.

Community feedback throughout the year consistently highlighted the visibility, accessibility, and dedication of Ilitha Labantu staff, reflecting the organisation's continued role as a trusted and deeply embedded presence within the communities it serves. Looking ahead, the organisation remains committed to building robust support systems for staff and lay counsellors, including expanded wellness support, professional development opportunities, and strengthened operational systems. These investments are essential to sustaining the wellbeing of those who carry out emotionally demanding work while ensuring that communities continue to receive high-quality, compassionate care.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend sincere appreciation to our partners, stakeholders, funders, and donors for their continued support in advancing the organisation's work to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors.

We acknowledge our government partners, including key departments and justice-sector stakeholders, for their collaboration in strengthening coordinated responses and improving access to services. To our fellow civil society organisations and community structures: the relationships we have built together form a broader safety net that reaches further because of your presence.

We are especially grateful to our staff and volunteers whose dedication ensures that survivors receive consistent and compassionate care. We honour the courage and resilience of survivors who place their trust in our services; we will continue to walk this journey with you.

Finally, we recognise young people and emerging leaders in our communities whose commitment to justice will shape a more equal and safer future.

As we carry forward the legacy of our founder, Mam Mandisa Monakali, we are reminded that justice and healing are not destinations reached in a single step - they are journeys that must be walked together.

Siyabulela; thank you.





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