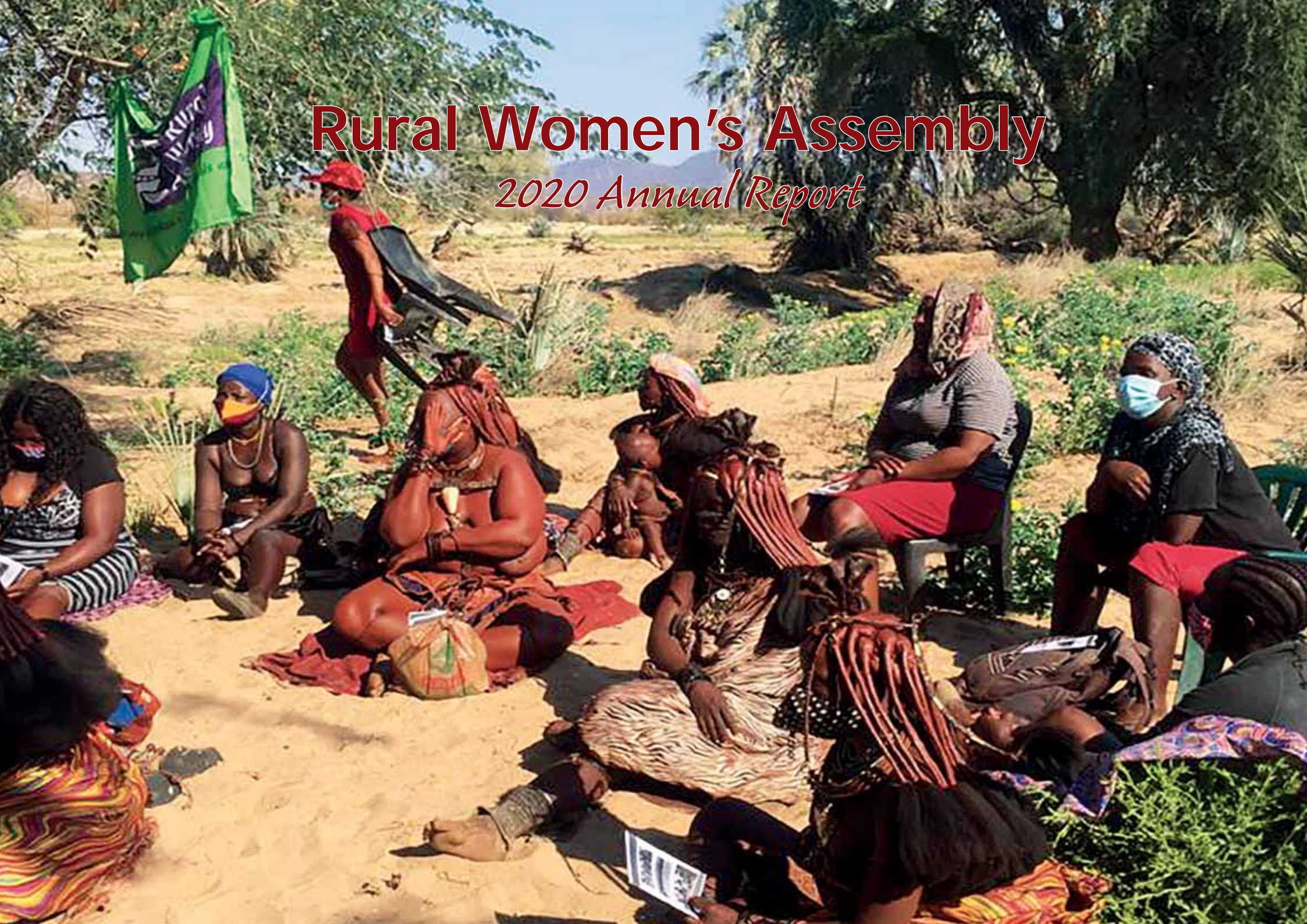
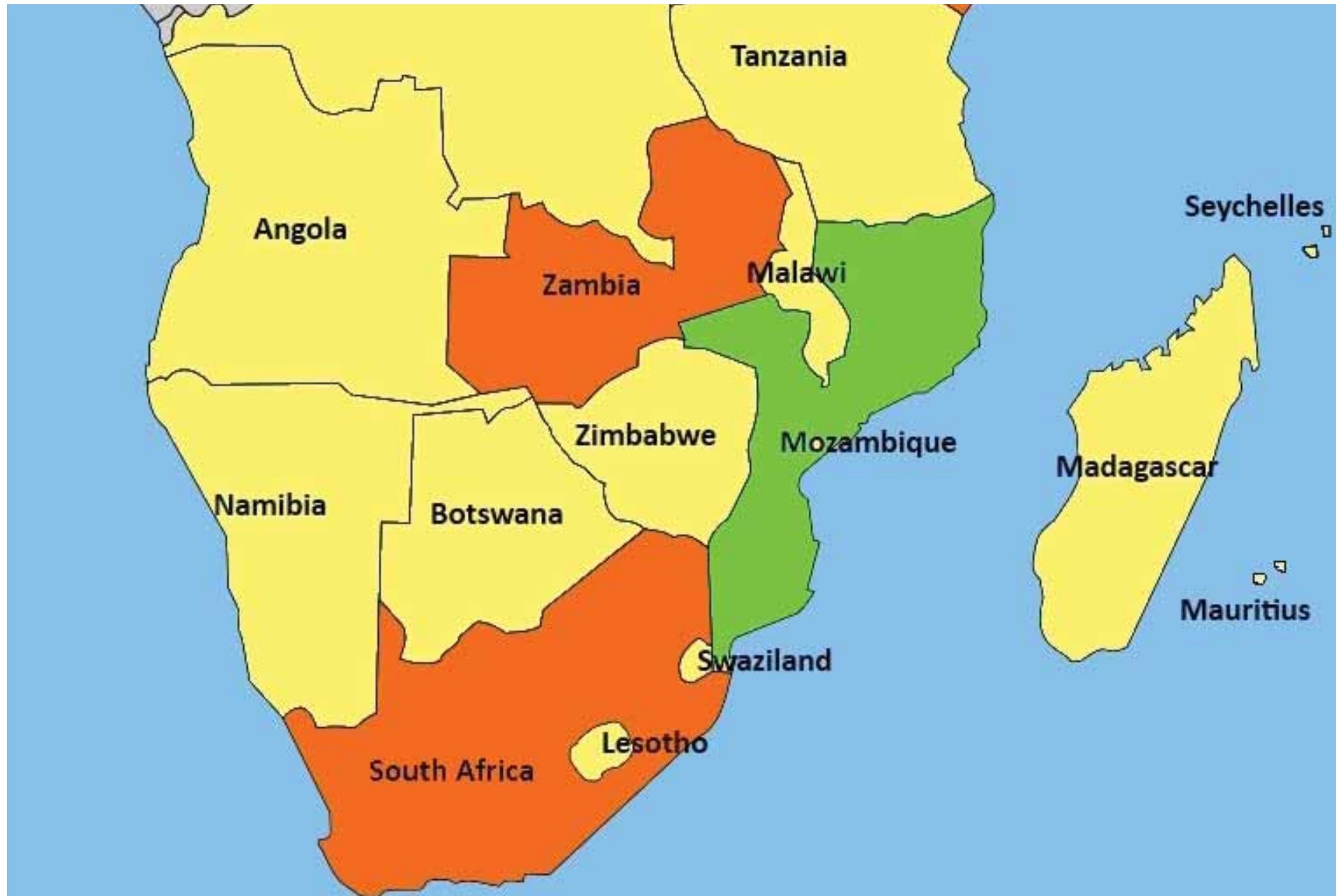


Rural Women's Assembly

2020 Annual Report





List of abbreviations and acronyms

C-19	COVID-19
CFBs	Constituency Focal Persons
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Programme
GBV	Gender Based Violence
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RFP	Regional Focal persons
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAPSN	Southern Africa Peoples' Solidarity Network
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNFSS	United nations Food Systems Summit
WHO	World Health Organisation
WRM	Water Resource Management

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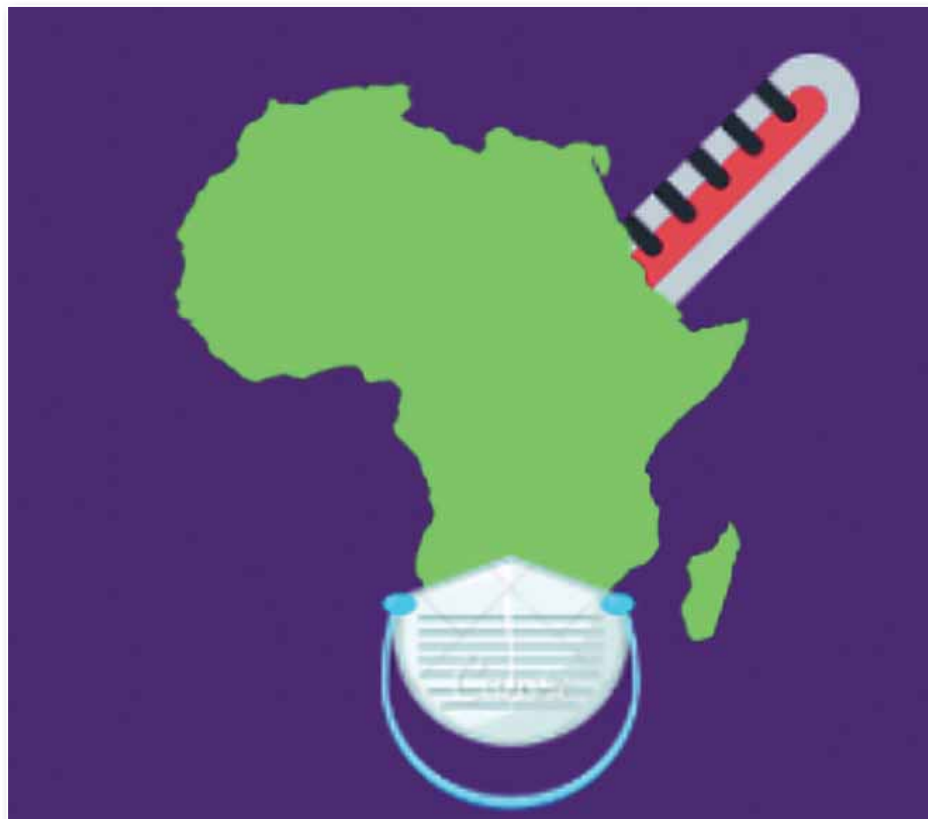
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Context



1.1 No return to normality – normal was the problem!!

2020 is a year that will not easily be forgotten. The COVID (C-19) pandemic has without doubt been the biggest disruptor to our



lives in recent history. No territory has been spared the impact of the SARS-Cov-2 and its various impacts whether these are health related or the number of cases or deaths (direct and indirect) – most health systems globally have been tested.

Sadly, health systems in South Africa and Southern Africa, which were already in a rather fragile state as a result of the austerity measures and the marginalisation of health and other public services over the past decades, fared poorly. Hospitals struggled because of the unavailability of medicines and health equipment, sufficient health workers and facilities for testing, laboratory services, beds, etc.

2,46 million women and men succumbed to the C-19 pandemic globally. In the SADC region, South Africa stood out with over 1,4 million infections and the large numbers of people that succumbed to the virus. In South Africa, hundreds of health care professionals lost their lives, and many were infected by C-19.

The pandemic also exposed the deep socio-economic inequalities in the region and the daily experiences of local people in accessing basic goods and needs such as shelter, food and water.

Additionally, most countries in the region implemented National States of Disasters (Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe), States of Emergencies (Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, eSwatini (formerly known as Swaziland), Lesotho, Mozambique and Namibia) and Declarations of Public Health Emergencies (Botswana, Madagascar) as ways of coping with the impact of the pandemic.

Many Southern Africa governments acted swiftly in implementing lockdowns and travel restrictions in the early days of the pandemic, borders in region were closed except for transport of food and goods. Often the measures introduced were a one-size fits all.

The impacts of the measures imposed to prevent the spread of C-19 are diverse, complex and multidimensional and include

not just a deepening economic crisis and recession but it is also adversely affecting the livelihoods of many, including groups that were already vulnerable prior to C-19.

While migrant workers are particularly vulnerable, the impacts of C-19 are broad, and in that sense, all workers are affected. And whilst it is true that the economic impact of C-19 affected even the wealthiest nations, for some regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, it meant that it further compromised the situation with unemployment rising to unprecedented levels. In South Africa, unofficial unemployment is over 40% generally whilst in Southern Africa the figures are over 50%, especially amongst young people.

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) economic indicators contractions have been observed and/or forecasted as direct consequences of C-19 with a contraction at regional level of over 3% in 2020, 6.4% for South Africa, 13.1% for Botswana and 7.4% for Zimbabwe.

Whilst most countries of the global north suffered and continue suffer great losses from the pandemic their social protection measures and stimulus packages kept hunger at bay, but this was not the case in the global South. Most countries in SADC region were not able to provide unemployment relief packages or food. These deficits of social protection for households were more acute for migrant workers, undocumented workers and seasonal agricultural workers and millions of domestic workers.

This situation increased vulnerabilities due to the reduction in social protection measures; the state of inequality, which was already pronounced in most of Southern African countries, has been exacerbated by the C-19 crisis and poverty levels have deepened.

The region saw increased debt levels as SADC Member States reached out internationally to attract funding not only for direct C-19 interventions but also to support government spending in other areas inclusive of relief grants. The South African National Treasury in February 2021 warned that the escalating debt (now at 80% of GDP) was superseding that of other emerging markets.

The increased country debt was also reflected in very high household debt. Overall, diverse impacts on households have been recorded across the board but migrant workers and seasonal women workers were particularly exposed to the adverse impacts of C-19 response measures, inclusive of:

- a) Reduced income due to temporary workplace closures, work stoppages or outright job losses especially in sectors not deemed to be essential such as hospitality and industry.
- b) Deprivation and extreme poverty driven by the above, with many migrants becoming stranded in the countries of destination with little or no income to meet their basic needs; nor enough to pay for assisted repatriation.
- c) Closures of public transport systems, preventing many migrant workers from getting to their workplace even in cases where they were allowed to continue to work.

1.2 Lack of safety-nets and access to justice

Whilst governments in Global North such as the Germany, USA, Britain, etc, introduced massive stimulus packages to business and to households during the lockdowns and restrictions, this was

not the possible in many parts of Southern Africa. This lack of government-supported social safety nets meant that under total and partial lockdowns the poorest communities faced difficulties in accessing food, water, health care and other necessities.

Across the region, the socio-economic and political impact of the crisis, combined with often stringent government restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, at times led to citizen disgruntlement and unrest and heavy police crackdowns. Poor and marginalised communities were most vulnerable to such abuses as they disobeyed lockdown regulations in search of necessities.



Women in the informal sector struggled as markets were shut and cross border trading came to a standstill as borders were also closed. These measures also meant that layers of rural livelihoods, especially those of small-scale farmers, producers and fishers were made more vulnerable and dependent.

In some instances, small-scale farmers were stopped from harvesting their

produce and had to watch much needed food go to waste in the fields.

Safety-nets, awareness raising, supply of soap and sanitisers were often made available by the NGO and the welfare sectors.

In this regard, the Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) across the region played a role in working with communities to raise awareness, distribute pamphlets, develop ways of dispensing water for hand washing, distributing seeds and food parcels, etc.

Another problem that many workers had to deal with, especially those that were retrenched in South Africa, was the fact that most government departments, especially the Department of Labour, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) were shut and workers really struggled to access any basic rights.

1.3 Gender- Based Violence

Although most of governments across the region have indicated that the levels of GBV had decreased during the pandemic mainly due to the closures of alcohol outlets, this is very different to what the RWA country chapters suggest.

In fact, the RWA members argue that the figures appear lower because the government and the police were mainly focused on monitoring the C-19 restrictions, the curfews and the general ways in which the public responded.

Women complain that they often could not get to the police stations to lay complaints. Most public services, such as social services, trauma counselling or even safe houses were not accessible.



This meant that the tensions in many poor households were very high as the homes were overcrowded, with many people living in one shack or rondavel. Given that food was scarce and schools were closed, this placed an increased burden on women to deal with: besides the challenges of deepening unemployment, poverty, no safety nets, hunger, children and frustrated men holed up in the same space.

1.4 Climate change and ongoing extractivism

Preoccupation with C-19, the slow pace of the vaccine roll-out, vaccine nationalism, the lack of resources of poor countries to secure the vaccine and the lack of real or accurate information in South Africa and Southern Africa about the vaccine, has

clouded our consciousness of climate change. This is despite the fact that Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa have experienced yet another cyclone. Mozambique was still recovering from Cyclone Idai of 2020.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat recently stated that by 2030 Africa will need trillions of dollars in “conditional and unconditional” financing support to deal with the continents’ climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. The strategies are based on the Paris Agreement of reducing global temperatures to between 1.5 -2 degrees Celsius.

Already the Southern Africa region continues to experience ongoing cycles of extreme droughts and floods, with annual cyclones becoming “normal”.

In the Eastern and Southern African region, more than 35,1 million people (50% being children) need humanitarian assistance due to climate-related shocks, health emergencies and displacements. Prolonged dry spells during the second half of the 2019-2020 rainy season resulted in reduced seasonal production, food deficits, price increases and increased food insecurity in many parts of southern Africa including southern Angola, Namibia, southern Zambia, and parts of Lesotho, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Zambia reports indicate that in October 2019 and March 2020 47% of the districts were severely impacted by the poor raining season. The Government of Lesotho issued an official press statement expressing concern about the predicted deteriorating drought situation in April this year. However, by late 2020 the region received good rains and this signalled a moment of optimism in the midst of the C-19 dark clouds.

The RWA members from the various country chapters argue that there exists a huge gap between policy for “disaster management systems, early warning systems” and the plight of communities displaced by cyclones and floods. The seasonal cyclones and tropical storms in Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar mean that populations remain at risk. Nevertheless, poor, rural women point out that often, in Mozambique, they are warned to move to higher regions, and certainly this saves lives. However, there is very limited support for the loss of property, livelihoods and loss of environment especially topsoil and arable lands. The infra-structure in much of the region requires upgrading and the creation of water management systems that can harvest water for the drought periods.

There is also growing concern over the way our coastal lines are exploited. The example of the conflict in the North of Mozambique, in Cabo Delgado, and the near destruction of parts of Mauritius’ pristine coast when the Japanese tanker split oil last year, are indicators of some of the confluences between extractivism,



environmental destruction and climate change in the region – these activities and events have multiplying impacts on the food (in)security and increasing impoverishment of the local populations.

The commercial interests in the oceans have increased hugely as land-based sources become fully exploited or exhausted. Costly endeavours such as commercial mining of the deep seabed, are now considered not only feasible but imminent. Likewise, the search for novel bioactive compounds to address antimicrobial resistance is increasingly focused on remote deep-sea microorganisms, whereas space constraints on land have contributed to the construction of large-scale offshore wind farms and investment in deep-water installations. In South Africa as well as in the region, as recession bites deep, the “blue economy” is touted as the solution for our economic woes.

1.5 Our water resources

For the RWA the question of access to water cannot be separated from land use, food production and daily life. It is essential that rural women ensure that access to water is also seen as a gendered issue. Therefore, we see the need to promote normative changes that ensure women's and other vulnerable groups participation in water resource management (WRM) and in the whole water supply chain.

It starts by not simply viewing them as end-users but to engage them in a gender-smart transition in WRM. Around the world, women are often blocked from participation in WRM institutions by both direct and indirect obstacles. Direct obstacles may include the lack of title deeds to land, thus making them ineligible for participation in water user associations, or lack of



technical qualifications that are assumed to make them unsuitable candidates for management jobs. Indirect obstacles can include the harmful gender norms which discourage girls from engaging in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and reaching management positions in other fields, or norms which prevent women from active participation in consultation mechanisms, female illiteracy rates, lack of women role models, male hiring committees that are reluctant to bring women into all-male environments, job requirements for frequent travel or long hours that make it difficult for women to reconcile work life with family life and lack of women-friendly policies to retain women working in WRM after they get married and/or have children.

1.6 Failing food system

2020 and the C-19 pandemic have highlighted the growing pandemic of hunger. A recent WHO (World Health Organisation) meeting estimates that more than 820 million people globally are

undernourished. This is a jump of 60 million in five years. Nearly a quarter of all children under five are stunted and 1.9 billion adults are overweight.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri, early in 2021 stated that the global food crisis had become “chronic, urgent and set to intensify”. He made the point that the UNFSS (UN Food Systems Summit) that was meant to take place in September 2021 and deal with hunger appears to have lost direction as the focus is now on science and technology, money and markets, and does not address “fundamental questions of inequality, accountability and governance”.

According to Fakhri, “It [appears] heavily skewed in favour of one type of approach to food systems, namely market-based solutions ... it leaves out experimental/traditional knowledge that has the acute effect of excluding indigenous peoples and their knowledge”. The business sector has been part of the problem of food systems but has not been held accountable. The former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the current UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, De Schutter, as well as Olivia Yambi, a nutrition expert and former UNICEF official, also promote agroecology.

This is one of the reasons why RWA has joined hands with AFSA (Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa) to challenge the 2021 UNFSS framework and the role of Dr Kalibata and her Summit Secretariat. Over 500 popular organisations (farmer movements, peasants unions, rural women, NGOs) challenged the appointment of Dr Kalibata to drive the UNFSS given her role and link with corporate food systems.



One would expect that a UN Summit coming from the Secretary General's office, dealing with food security, would have human rights on the agenda from the outset, and then ensure that human rights are central to the entire process.

Presently the UN Declarations on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas and on the Right to Food place peoples demands at the centre and connect to traditional knowledge, scientific knowledge, social sciences, and cultural practices including agroecological and organic production. The pandemic is an opportunity to rethink our food systems and particularly develop strategies for local food systems.

1.7 Rebuilding systems of solidarity and hope

It is clear that the C-19 pandemic has ushered in a new moment. It will be foolish and counter intuitive to imagine that the task is to go back to the way "things" were. Much is changing in the world, new ways of communication, of connecting, the world of work etc.

The pandemic in many ways has forced us to "shut down", to rethink, reflect on how we organise our work. But most importantly, we will have to think about how to organise our resistance and how we rebuild new visions, new imaginations and hopes.

The C-19 pandemic cannot be reviewed in isolation from climate change, the intrusion of human activity on nature. In going forward to we need to rethink our relation to nature and our levels of consumption and modes of production.

Objectives for the period: 2020

- Mobilise rural women, peasants/small-scale farmers, producers, fishers, farm workers, farm and forest dwellers from the SADC region.
- Critically engage their governments as well as regional and global governance structures in food, agriculture, climate and land policy frameworks.
- Unlock local processes of self-organisation and learning to critique the proposals that are particularly aimed at the commodification of nature and the privatization of our common goods.
- Participate in people's spaces especially spaces that can advance the interests of rural women, spaces that oppose racism, xenophobia, homophobia and violence against women and children.
- Develop and share concrete alternatives that undermine the dominant agricultural and extractivist models.
- Strengthen a feminist analysis and critique of the false solutions such as the Green Economy and climate "smart" agricultural proposals.

*Overview, Achievements,
Progress Report for 2020*



3.1 COVID-19, New ways of working and New methodology

The introduction started to speak of challenges that the RWA as a movement encountered in 2020. Fortunately, we had an opportunity to organise the first reference group meeting at the end of January 2020 and develop the plan of action for the year. Of course, the pandemic was furthest from our calculations. This notwithstanding, the plan we developed acted as a general guide for the interventions and plans that we unfolded during 2020.

By the end of March 2020, most of the countries in Southern Africa followed the South Africa and the global model of strict lockdowns, restrictions and curfews to “flatten the curves” and to give the health facilities in the region an opportunity to prepare. The leaders in the RWA country chapters reported on the numerous challenges the membership faced during C-19.

It was clear that the restrictions imposed on Southern Africa did not deal adequately with the informal nature of the local food markets, the informal sector and the impact of the restrictions on small-scale farmers and their livelihoods. Agriculture was declared an essential service, but in villages of Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa many producers were saddled with food crops rotting in their fields, as all local markets were shut down.

Similarly, yet uneven situations were also reported from all the RWA chapters across the region and the fears in Zimbabwe are huge given the crisis in the health services and the collapse of hospitals.

One of the early actions of the RWA was to take forward public awareness drives around the C-19 pandemic. We developed pamphlets, radio programmes, organised distribution of sanitisers,

soap making sessions as well as local workshops on the C-19 health protocols, etc. In addition, in some countries such as South Africa, there were also solidarity drives and rural women set up food banks, soup kitchens and distributed food hampers, seeds as well as encouraged the establishment of home gardens.

Besides organising awareness raising actions we also had to focus on strengthening our country movements and leadership structures.

There is no doubt that it has been a really tough year and initially we struggled to adjust to working “remotely” and also virtually. However, after some experimentation, a great deal of discussions and floundering, we re-organised our work and managed to keep the movement operational at several levels.

3.2 Keeping the Reference Group involved and leading

We quickly shifted to monthly leadership meetings where between 20 leaders from across the ten chapters would join the online (virtual) leadership meetings. These Reference Group meetings allowed us to keep the leaders connected, develop plans for country level as well as regional activities.

We managed to install zoom accounts for all the country chapters and we assisted with data. We set up a media task team of young women (one from each country) to assist us to increase our database and outreach to members. Each country set up a Facebook page and chat groups. The leadership also assisted the country chapters to work out appropriate local ways of working and staying connected to the membership base.

One of the first tasks was to ensure that Facebook pages were

Some companies closed, others restructured and downsized leaving most people unemployed, adding to the already high unemployment in the country. We saw increased hunger: More than 90% of food is imported from SA and due to the fact that borders were closed, food prices were increased drastically. People could no longer take a taxi to go to South Africa to do shopping.

However, the biggest challenges were at a health level. Most of the clinics were closed due to lack of protective personal equipment (PPE). There were not enough testing laboratories in Lesotho.

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One of the first tasks was to ensure that Facebook pages were set, WhatsApp groups were created and strategies for passing information to members as well as getting members to respond and report on local issues were in place.

We also developed a methodology that ensured we went beyond the small leadership core. This meant increasing the numbers on the database and the women had to find local spaces that were safe and in the open where women could gather for meetings. We decided to decentralise much of the work.

3.3 Decentralisation of work

To decentralise our meetings, the webinar series as well as to create new platforms for organising, we had to build the local infra-structure. This included setting up zoom accounts, training leaders to use different virtual mediums. All groups had to get data projectors and speakers so that the members could actively be involved in webinars etc.

We organised a host of webinars:

- Launch of the RWA booklet on Waste: We had 32 logged in links, which fed to 200 members from 9 countries in the region- SA, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, Madagascar, eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi. The 200 women were meeting in different locations across the region. More than a 1000 joined via Facebook.
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) capacity building was also conducted online. Over 40 women joined the 3-day workshop on “what is PAR” – this session of capacity building was linked to the Communication Audit.

eSwatini: <https://www.facebook.com/RuralWomen3/>

Lesotho: <https://www.facebook.com/Lesothoruralwomen>

Madagascar: <https://www.facebook.com/Rural-Womens-Assembly-Madagascar-110886513990205>

Malawi: <https://www.facebook.com/RuralWomeninMalawi>

Namibia: <https://www.facebook.com/nrwa.ngo>

SouthAfrica: <https://www.facebook.com/ruralwomenSA>

Zambia: <https://www.facebook.com/Zambiaruralwomensassembly>

Zimbabwe: <https://www.facebook.com/WomenandLandassembly>

Zimbabwe: <https://www.facebook.com/WomenandLand>

- The Farmer Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) was conceptualised as a Speak Out. This was also a dual method webinar with 200 women meeting together from across the region and others joining via webinar. The livestreams in the meeting were at 300 viewers and views of the video recording after the event went to 1600 views.
- Participation in SAPSN (Southern African People's Solidarity Network) at the SADC Heads of State Summit week of Action. We organised a number of different webinars and RWA members also joined other activities.
- August is Women's Month in South Africa, so several activities were organised. On 8 August we also launched the SMS Helpline on Gender Based Violence in South Africa.
- In October we organised both local events and actions to celebrate International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day. Hundreds of members were involved in seed sharing, small workshops, livelihood markets, marches and more. These actions were brought together in a webinar.
- In October we also supported a launch of a Film called 'We

Rise for our Land', a film that starred a few of our members in Mozambique, eSwatini and Zambia.

- Annual feminist school: we utilised multi-media methods of having women at local mlevels as well as using the virtual space to hold the school together as a regional feminist school.

The decentralisation of activities was also critical to

ensuring that the RWA at country level remained active and operational. It could have been easy to be overwhelmed by the C-19 restrictions and fears that come with the health risks.

We were extremely mindful of the pandemic, yet we attempted to continue to function and develop strategies to keep the movement alive, to be supportive to the base and grassroots structures at local and village levels.



3.4 The membership is over 120 000 women

No	Country	Partners who are members	Membership
1	Zimbabwe	Women and Land, ZIMSOFF, Zimbabwe National Farmers Union, Women -for Peace, Centre for Development of Women and Children.	60 000
2	Zambia	Kapyanda Women' Clubs, Chinchwa Babili Cooperative and Kanakatapa Women's Cooperative.	8000
3	Swaziland	Individual farmers, cross border traders, farm workers	25 000
4	South Africa	Women on Farms, LAMOSA, TCOE, Inyanda Land Rights Movement (including its affiliates: Mopani Farmers Association, Free State RWA, Mawubuye, etc)	18 000
5	Mozambique	UNAC (Mozambique National Peasants Union) Forum Mulher, ADREA (rural women forum in the North)	10 000
6	Malawi	NASFAM (Malawi National small-scale farmers union)	8200
7	Madagascar	Individual members – mainly farmers and rural women	4500
8	Mauritius	CARES workers education Trust, No to sea grabs, Women in Agroecology- individual membership	1000
9	Namibia	Women farmers linked to National Union of Namibian Small-scale farmers/ farmers in communal areas	6800
10	Lesotho	Individual membership	5000
		Total	146 000

3.5 Communication Audit

One of the processes that we embarked on in 2020 was to undertake a communication audit. (see full report attached). Given that the movement had begun to re-organise its work, the methodology and ways of reaching the members, the general way that we worked, was temporarily broken. There was a marked increase on the use and reliance on technology. This

meant that it was essential that the leadership assess how well this approach was functioning. This has also meant that it was necessary to understand internal communication at all levels of the RWA as well as have a clear understanding of how members accessed information, engaged with decisions, participated in campaigns, raised consciousness and the deepening of a feminist methodology that is not centred around those that can access and influence “knowledge and decisions”, but rather on how our

members outside the big rural towns have access to technological devices, data and even electricity.

The main objective for the communications audit was to build an inventory of existing communication tools and methods, to understand what exists in remote rural villages and how information is accessed so that the RWA is better positioned to develop appropriate and effective modes of communication as a way to inform and enhance the strategic communication plans for the future. The leading question for this audit was “How do we reach our members”. The RWA wants to remain a movement that is democratic and selforganised, and the audit was a means to assist the RWA to build appropriate platforms.

The report was completed in December 2020. RWA members were trained (online) in participatory action research (PAR) and also assisted in developing the questionnaire that was used.

Each country chapter conducted the communication audit. The initial target set by the Reference Group was to reach 3100 members coming from all sectors of the membership. However, the survey only reached 2850 across the region, as follows:

Most of our members indicated that they are farmers and live in remote areas. For the overwhelming majority, radio was the commonest means of accessing information. The mobile phone was the main device through which members accessed information from the movement and the main means that they used to convey their messages as well.

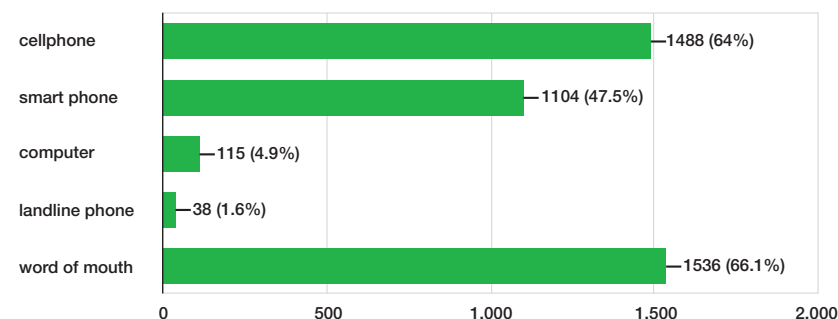
The insights gained from the Communication Audit as some graphs below indicate have implications for how we organise and how the RWA develops its internal communication and media

eSwatini	235
Lesotho	324
Madagascar	260
Malawi	186
Mauritius	3
Mozambique	432
Namibia	202
South Africa	681
Zambia	202
Zimbabwe	409

strategy. This is very important as 70% of the RWA members live in remote rural areas and English, French and Portuguese are not the main languages of communication.

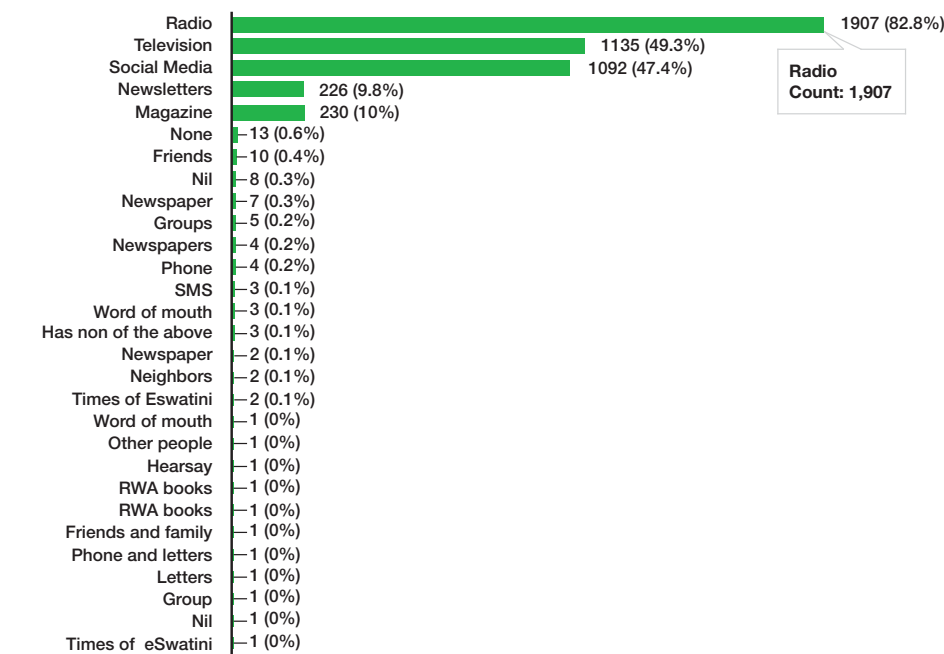
What device(s) do you use to communicate?

2,324 responses



What media forms do you have access to?

2,302 responses



3.6 Leadership skills audit

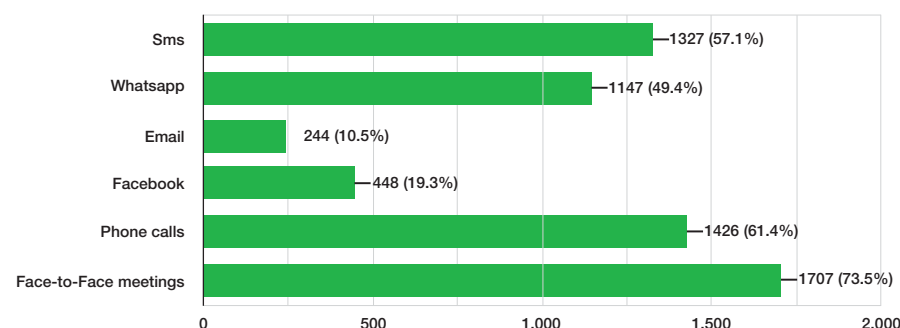
In late 2020 the RWA also managed to bring on board a team of consultants to conduct “A leadership Skills and Capacity Audit” across the members in the region. We viewed this as a necessary investment given that the RWA continues to grow and extend its reach. Moreover, it can provide the movement with a shared understanding of its leadership skills and needs to strengthen capacity, whilst also highlighting the areas that need to be prioritised in order to grow and sustain the movement. This audit, like the skills audit, was conducted during the C-19 restrictions and used an online tool.

76 members from different country chapters of the RWA participated in the survey. Participants came from the following countries: South Africa, Zambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

Most participants were between 36-55 years old. Both individual and group participation was allowed to accommodate those who didn't have access to smartphones or computers.

How would you like to communicate with RWA?

2,324 responses



The consultancy used a Mentimeter to ensure the audit process is interactive and to allow real time engagement between the consultants and participants. Although it is argued that the Mentimeter brings an element of fun in the process, when reviewing the tool later many of the participants that were involved did not find it so effective. Despite the limitations and challenges there were some useful insights gained.

They framed the leadership audit around the work of Batliwala (2015) who argues that leadership falls into two categories - that of a “leader” as well as “process or practice”. Whilst this audit looked at the skills, capacity and resources that individual and

collective leaders bring into the movement, it also looked at the leadership processes and practice of RWA.

The report uses the works of Charlotte Bauch, Ahlquist and Levi (2013) (cited in We Rise toolkit) who see “leadership as something that different people have to varying degrees, skills that can be built upon, supported, enhanced because they are needed in the world. In this regard, leadership is not seen just as something that people have for the sake of it but rather towards a given purpose.” The report also states that leadership is not limited to leadership positions and numbers of people who are formally elected. These views are very much in line with those of the RWA.

The Audit process looked at 10 thematic areas. For each of these we sought to understand what skills and capacity existed and areas that need to be enhanced within RWA. The following thematic areas were assessed:

- Self-Leadership
- Collective leadership
- Decision making
- Communication
- Strategic work of RWA
- Relationship work
- Organizing and Mobilizing Work
- Conflict resolution
- Resourcing work and
- Financial management

3.6.1 Analysis and recommendations

Strengths and qualities

The results above show that members of RWA possess some of the important qualities and strengths required in leadership. The findings in here show that RWA members are visionaries that are full of confidence and prepared to take risks in light of the challenges that rural women face and that are necessary to grow any organisation. On the other hand, there is a need to place emphasis on other leadership qualities such as trust and honesty, selflessness, adaptability and other feminist leadership capabilities that are important to grow movements.

However as is seen in the findings, RWA has worked hard to build the confidence of its members and belief in their own practices and leadership capacity. When not addressed, these two elements have the potential to create insecurity and thus affect how women lead and whether they will have the confidence to share power (Batliwala, 2010).

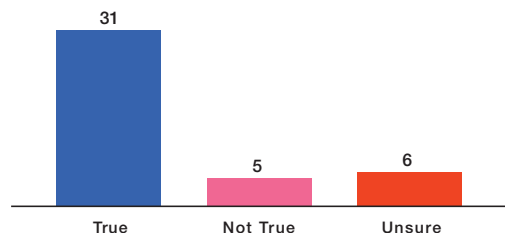
RWA needs to pay attention to enhancing the capacity of the members on how they can leverage resources and the capacity that exists amongst its local constituencies and their contacts. This must also take into account bringing on board a diverse grassroots base that speaks to the reality of RWA's work and needs.

3.6.2 On Decision-making - Findings

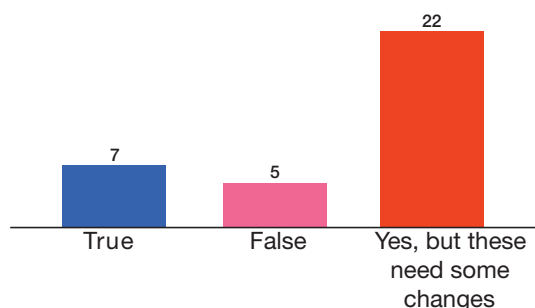
73% of participants indicated that different voices are encouraged in decision-making processes of RWA, 14% were unsure whilst 11% disagreed. 52% of participants said that this is supported by clear mechanisms to ensure wide participation whilst 47.5% could not confirm this. Out of those who could not confirm, 79% were

not sure whilst 21% were in total disagreement of the existence of such mechanisms.

3.1 When making decisions we encourage and accommodate different voices



9.3 We have ways to account to other members of RWA on financial matters of our movement



Good financial management is the bedrock of well managed organisations including social movements. The ability of leaders as well as the members to manage finances effectively enhances the sustainability of the organisation. Where internal capacity for effective management of finances does not exist, movements can find support from their networks. This leadership capacity and skills audit sought to determine: the fiduciary support available to the respondents both internally within the RWA and externally; if there is knowledge and understanding of financial requirements; as well as if accountability mechanisms are available and if skills and capacity have been built through financial management training.

86% of the respondents affirmed that they have fiduciary support either within RWA or from an external partner or organisation. Of that, 93% suggested they need more skills and capacity.

94% of the respondents further suggested that they understand the requirements for managing funds. Of the 94%, 72% responded that there is a need for changes in the current requirements. The audit however did not go further to understand what changes are required.

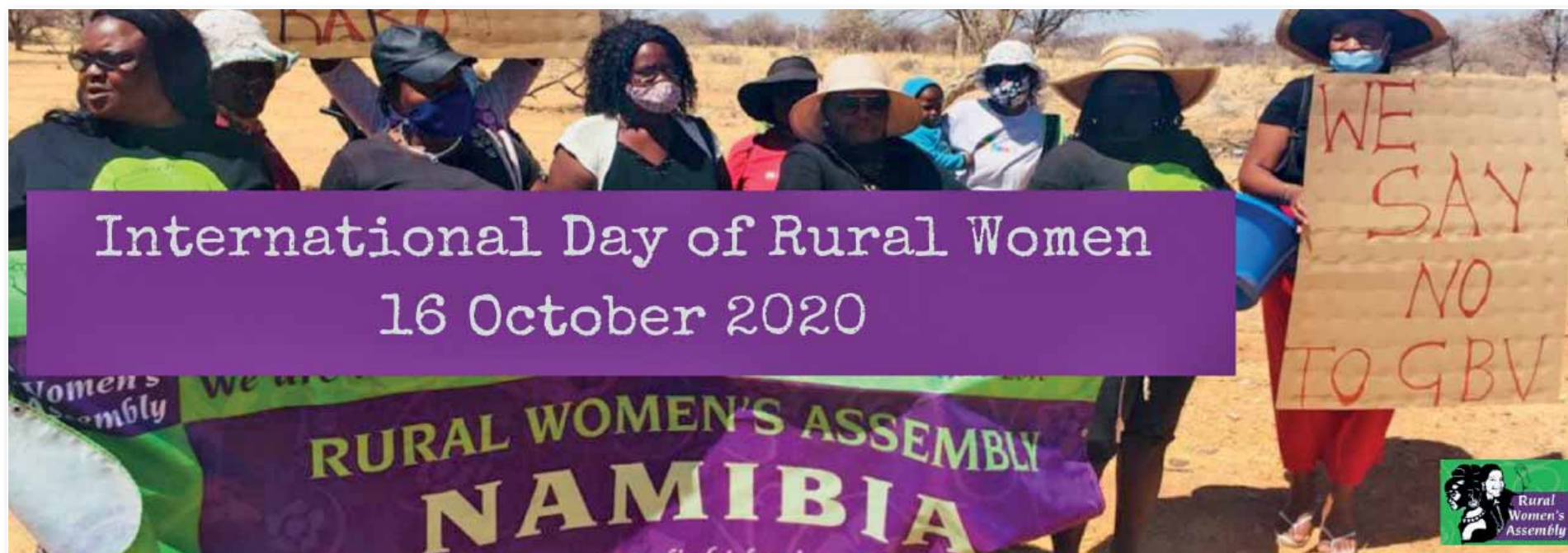
On the question of accountability mechanisms around finances, 85% responded that such mechanisms exist. Of the 85%, 76% responded that there is a need for changes in the accountability mechanisms that exist. As was with the earlier question above, participants were not asked what changes they want to see.

3.6.3 On the Entimeter:

Many of leaders that participated felt that the methodology was not very useful and were of the view that the exercise undertaken was too limited to really understand leadership, people were tired and often, because the process was online, many did not give adequate responses nor did they participate fully.

3.7 International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day

Annually the RWA would mark International Day of Rural Women (IDRW) and World Food Day (WFD), on 15 October and 16 October, with big events across the region aligned with the



themes and the strategic plans of RWA in that particular year. This year the official theme for IDRW was ***“Rural Women and girls building resilience”*** and for WFD was ***“ Grow, nourish, sustain. Together. Our actions are our future”***. This year the events, mobilisation and actions were also decentralised with all ten countries organising actions throughout October. Over 8000 women joined the activities.

The issue of food and hunger dominated as 2020 will forever be known as the year the globe was and remains ravaged by the C-19 pandemic and the hunger that was manifested in many places, especially in the the global South. Keeping mindfulness about C-19 regulations, the leadership and members across the region managed well -regulated events in each of the countries in the SADC region which will be highlighted in this report.

The main political demands for the month of action were demands for land, water and food for all.

RWA argues that there can be no Right to Food and access to food if small-scale farmers and producers do not have land for food production. This period has shown clearly who controls food, who controls land for production of food and who controls the distribution of food.

The C-19 pandemic, or the “hunger pandemic” as its also known, has made hunger, poverty and growing inequality in the world more visible. In addition to hunger, the economic and social crisis caused by C-19 has illustrated the impact of years of neo-liberalism on Southern Africa. According to a recent Oxfam report, hunger was already on the rise even before the pandemic struck.

Our food system is completely skewed. Supermarkets and mega commercial farms control our agriculture and food systems. During the early period of the C-19 lockdowns, our government shut down local food markets, local shops in the neighbourhoods and the informal sector while the large retail sectors, the large supermarkets could continue to distribute

and “control” our food.

Small-scale producers and women farmers have demonstrated that they are the backbone of household and local food -production yet they receive very limited support from government. In fact, their contribution is invisible.



3.7.1 Conclusion:

Reading through this report, one should realise that the main demands of the International Day of the Rural Woman and World Food Day, were centred on the following: to address the growing hunger across the region; issues of Gender-Based Violence; the impact of climate change; access to productive land; and growing unemployment and a call for a Basic Income Grant across the region. The Southern Africa RWAs were busy all across the region going from community to community in the form of roadshows, community radio stations, television interviews, panel discussions and more. October, running into early November was marked as a period of action and the International Day of the Rural Woman and World Food Day, were marked with actions that brought to the centre the needs and demands of Rural Women and their communities to thrive and be resilient.

3.8 Media Report

Media has always played an important role in the RWA. It has assisted the movement to achieve greater connectivity, but it has also assisted the RWA to build its profile amongst its members and also beyond.

This is why 2020 was no different, and perhaps it was even more critical to have a strong voice, strong messaging and face. In the past the RWA has built up a team of young women, through the media training, and in 2020 this layer of young women could assist the RWA to document its work, write stories, report on local actions and assist the movement to get its message out.

Monthly newsletters were written and distributed, webinars were organised, and social media activities were increased.

The appointment of a media coordinator certainly assisted the RWA to increase and regularise the newsletters, press statements and general social media.

June: This was the first virtual event in the regional lockdown period. On the zoom call, we had 32 logged in links, which fed to 200 members from 9 countries in the region - SA, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Mozambique, Madagascar, eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi. Even after the event, people were still viewing Facebook with a reach of over 1000 people and at the time of the event,



there were 130 live views. The members were elated to see and share their stories. Others on the call were also inspired- one of the board members spoke about the power to write your own stories and have it printed and owned by you. A few others are still looking to get a copy!

August: RWA had a few events. The first event was a dialogue dedicated to discussing Farmer Input Subsidy Programmes (FISPs) in the region and to create a strategic plan centred on

keeping governments accountable for regional agreements on FISPs and collating data to support these programmes locally. Each of the 8 countries where FISPs are active, shared a presentation on their demands and present were also some regional partners who participated and shared in the demands set by RWA members. We had 50 logged in links, with 200 women meeting across the region.

October: As already mentioned above, RWA celebrated both International Rural Women's Day as well as World Food Day. Each of the countries in the region marked these days with many days of celebrations in which the 8 media coordinators were part of. As an online activity a wellness workshop was organised attended by 20 active links, screening to 30 women, with 208 views of the recording after the event with 113 watching the live stream on Facebook.



Highlights of the year: - 9 Facebook pages representing our presence in 8 of the countries in the region, reaching just over 2000 viewers. 8 women from the region - managing the Facebook pages with 12 Facebook posts per month; collating and writing stories at country level to produce 8 monthly Newsletters; making posters with canvas; create country-level Facebook Lives; co-writing statements; technically supporting online events in the region; Participatory Action Research training with more than 60 women from across the region.

Challenges: C-19 and subsequent lockdowns propelled the digitalisation of communications.

This does not negate the fact that some countries in our region have bad networks, lack electricity and unknown access to smart devices and the like. These made many engagements online difficult as sisters would drop in and out of calls missing parts of information, and lack of access to devices means other hurdles like not being able to participate in all online activities, or needing transport to get to areas with good network. Thus, the participation in producing media, supporting the Newsletter or generally taking forward our media and communication was uneven. Specific challenges experienced by the Communication and Media country coordinator and coordination team are mentioned under each country.

eSwatini worked hard on the Facebook Page, and the team's contributions to the newsletter were always done well and on time.

In Zimbabwe- always online, doing regular Facebook posts and regular stories for the newsletter. There was very limited follow up on the database and developing statements on issues that unfolded in Zimbabwe.

Zambia had many problems and there was a gap between the media coordinator and the leadership. There was no work on the database, very few Facebook posts and late newsletter stories.

Namibia- was active, very engaged and always asking for writing statements and co-writing. More needed to be done on database and Facebook.

Lesotho- remained very engaged and remained on top of all the tasks although they were not as active on Facebook but always did thorough posts. There were also no statements written nor was the database increased or checked.

Madagascar- managed the Facebook and was exceptional in supporting the Communications Audit in Madagascar. Madagascar is a bit sprawled and last year had a total lockdown for the most part of the last few months of the year and this made getting stories and remaining in touch with the members in provinces in the south exceptionally tough. Madagascar increased the database.

South Africa, Mozambique and Mauritius were not very engaged, and this will have to be addressed in 2021.

3.9 Seed Research

The seed research got under way in mid -August when the RWA seed research task team prepared the first phase of the pilot seed audit research process.

The process included:

- consolidating the working dynamics of the research task team and process.



- establishing issues of consent, participation and principles for research that are nonextractive, committed to the ethos of RWA's method, process and approach of "each one teach one", a deep respect for situated knowledge instead of hierarchies of research methods which alienate, exclude and draw instead on non-academic activist-scholars as cases for "higher" order analysis and theory.

- developing and agreeing on the research audit questions, specifically clarifying the purpose of the audit and agreeing on the focus of the audit as well as its scale.

- familiarising and developing consensus of various research methods and agreeing to a research approach that could best serve RWA.

- preparing and organising for country level RWA workshops with seed guardians, leadership and enumerators to work through the process and: 1) develop a country level seed list and catalogue; 2) discuss, sign off and add to the audit

questions; 3) assess the interest, take up and importance of the research; 4) identify seed narratives that can amplify and shed light on the meaning of seeds for RWA members.

- identification, selection and training of enumerators.
- assess the actual time/duration for conducting the audit process.
- identify possible challenges and stumbling blocks.
- actively assessing what policies exist and how familiar stakeholders are with country level seed policies.
- learning, analysis and observation through a guided research process.
- all the processes included the preparation, agenda suggestions, facilitation, documenting, coordinating and following up on decisions agreed upon by the research principals.
- parallel to the processes were the design of all material for discussion, adjustments and updates made by PI.

The context in which the pilot phase of the research was conducted was not easy primarily due to the impact and consequences of C-19 on RWA membership but also because of the restrictions on movement and concerns with regards to health and safety.

The uneven impact and regulations during the first lockdown in various countries in the region has had varying implications for in person meetings. The research is but one aspect of the work that the RWA country chapters are engaged in at programmatic level.

More so, RWA as a movement of predominantly rural women who are first and foremost small-scale farmers, the primary source of their livelihoods. The impact of C-19-19 has presented RWA leadership with an inordinate amount of pressures. Despite this the seed research continues, albeit with the necessary adjustments.

Between November 14th and December 11th 2020 seven RWA country level seed workshops were conducted in person, in indigenous languages, in Lesotho, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi. Some 170 rural women seed guardians participated in a day long process in the region.

The workshops, from all accounts, were extremely rich, with participants extremely engaged, inspired and committed to the objectives of the seed research. All principal country researchers found the workshop process very insightful and appear to be energised by the deep knowledge and herstories in their countries with regards to seed.

Currently we have six of the seven country workshop reports, four voice notes, one/two complete seed lists, three incomplete lists and two outstanding seed lists.

The primary researchers in their reports indicate that they find the research exciting, extremely rewarding and that they are learning a great deal. Already the collection of seed stories and narratives are also underway.

This work will be taken forward in 2021.

3.10 Feminist School

This year the Feminist School was organised using a dual

methodology of small localised schools at country levels as well as teaching and connecting virtually. Over 122 women joined the school from across the region.

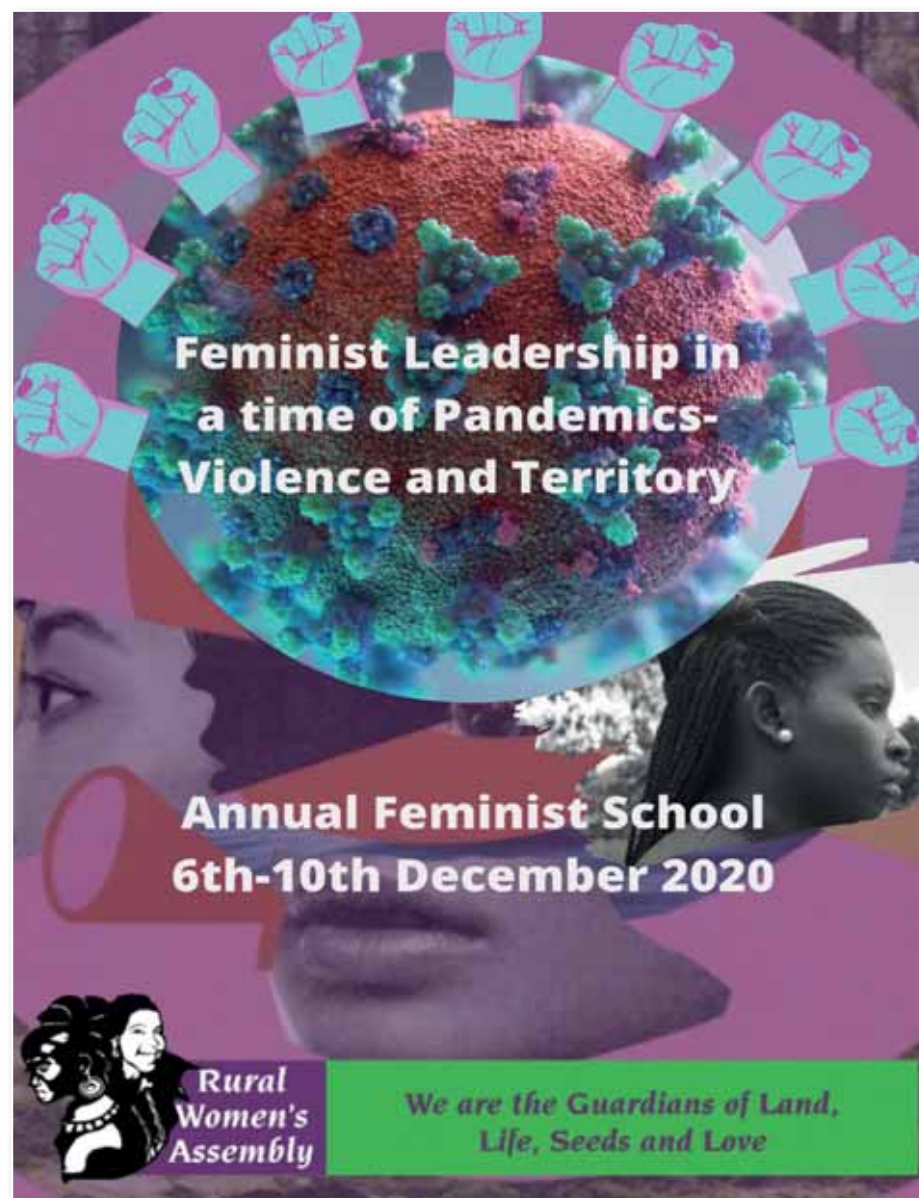
As part of the preparation, country chapters selected facilitators and these women discussed the programme methodology, the content and the coordination of the school.

This is the fifth Feminist School organised by the Southern African RWA. This year it was organised both as a virtual and stay-in school - in that we managed to organise the school both as a collective of local regional schools as well as one online coordinated managed school with a common programme, common set of readings and presentations etc. with women participating in 8 locations across Southern Africa. The theme for the feminist school was: **“Feminist Leadership in the time of pandemics: Violence and territory”**.

The objectives of the school were:

1. To get an overview of how country chapters coped with the C-19 pandemic at country level by identifying lessons, fault lines and strategies for survival (how did the pandemic impact on women?).
2. To create a space to share, learn, exchange and build on how rural women organised in the face of GBV, food insecurity, climate challenges and the loss of livelihoods.
3. To build capacity and deepen feminist leadership and activism in this period of global crisis (pandemic, economic, climate, social and ecological).
4. To reflect on and develop strategies for internal democracy

and collective actions as part of movement building in the current crisis.



Several topics were discussed over the five days, the women viewed films/documentaries and read articles etc. One of the themes that was revisited was what is meant by African

Feminisms? Below is a summary of the discussion: **What is the ideology of African Feminism? What are the rural women-structural problems?**

Feminism was defined as the ideology where women advocated for their rights on the ground of equality of sexes.

- Ideology is a system of ideas which forms the basis of feminism.
- The ideology of African Feminism is based on the uniqueness of the women's rights activists, struggles that activists must deal with which include culture, patriarchy, poor economies and natural disasters.

African Feminism is a type of feminist innovation by African sisters to address the living conditions (culture, tradition, underdevelopment) and needs of African women.

Some of the strains faced by African women include:

1. Unpaid care work
2. Landlessness
3. Culture
4. Patriarchy

Therefore, Africa Feminism is African women's struggle for identity, recognition and inclusiveness.

We are saying: ***"Leave no woman behind leave no girl behind"***

Another group gave the following summary of their conversations:

The collective session started at 9h30 with brief reports and recapping of the previous day.

- They understood that feminism was a way of thinking, a way of challenging the mainstream culture, it was an ideology.
- By ideology, groups said it was clear that it introduced a pattern of behaviour and thinking, it had to become interwoven into the practice, the methodology and also

into the daily consciousness.

- Agency is our activism as women, every woman has agency and can act to challenge culture, domination, etc., but when we act together it is more powerful.
- Patriarchy had to be understood as a global system of oppression of women and predates the capitalist system. It is incorrect to argue that patriarchy was brought to Africa with colonialism. Please listen to the McFadden video clip again.

- Feminism is not anti- men nor is it only for women; men can also develop and have a feminist consciousness.
- Land is used as a means of control and through culture land denial has denied rural women's independence.
- There is not a uniform "feminism", of course, not a common global understanding of what is feminism - by Africa Feminism it implies women leaders have to shine a strong light on the oppressive and exploitative systems that perpetuate inequality and a gender division of labour and the pushes the burden of care onto women.
- As women we have to transform, disrupt systems of oppression.

Other themes that the school dealt with are: Impact of C-19 on women, especially poor women. The care economy, burden of care on women and C-19 and GBV. The school continues to be one of the highlights of the RWA's annual calendar.

3.11 External Evaluation

Despite all the difficulties of functioning as a regional movement, the RWA also managed to do an external evaluation. Though the evaluation was completed, it has to be noted that the process was mostly done on -line and therefore there are many limitations.

The evaluation was expected to take on a feminist approach and be mindful of the nature of the institution that RWA is. Covering the period 2009 to 2020, the evaluation was expected to reflect on RWA at regional, country and local level. The proposed evaluation was to have three dimensions:

- A reflection on the complex context in which RWA operates, looking at how this has influenced its work and growth over the years.
- Given the current context of C-19-19 with its impact across the globe, the evaluation examined its current implications – both challenges and opportunities - on RWA and its future ability to organise.
- Lastly, the evaluation was expected to reflect on the extent to which RWA's partners and the support they had offered to the movement over the years had influenced its work and what their value-addition has been.

To respond to these questions the evaluation followed the five standard evaluation criteria based on the OECD criteria for evaluating development interventions. Applying the Viable Systems Model (VSM) developed by Beer (1985), the evaluation applied the criteria to 5 interrelated aspects of RWA as an integrated system

1. **Relevance** – examining identity, organising and governance structures and systems of RWA in relation to its fitness for purpose in the past and in the current context.

2. **Impact** – assessing the key achievements and milestones of RWA over the past 10 years.

3. **Effectiveness** – examining the extent to which the feminist approaches and strategies used by RWA have been effective towards engendering a feminist practice, consciousness building and leadership across the movement both at a local and regional levels.

4. **Efficiency** – assessing the extent to which the resources deployed to carry out RWA's work (financial and human) are efficient, as well as reviewing ways in which RWA monitors what it does.

5. **Sustainability** of RWA's work – with a focus on financial sustainability of RWA, knowledge management, learning and institutional capacity.

Findings

Relevance- Governance, identity and purpose

The evaluation found that RWA's identity and purpose is clear, well understood and communicated among members and tested continuously for relevance to context. This is seen in its growing agenda and responsiveness to the needs and lived realities of its members, most recently evidenced by the C-19 pandemic which RWA took in its stride regardless of the fact that prevailing work and the new online organising ethic was a particular challenge for its target group.

While it would appear that the diversity of RWA members could be a threat to its identity, the network has found ways to manage the tensions by working in a true intersectional way that was also seen as a strength of this movement. It has a shared sense of purpose that drives its work, and this is well understood by its members. As part of shaping its unique identity, it has found distinctive ways of showcasing the cultural and historical diversity of its members. Whilst not an easy path and something that has certainly been a challenge, RWA makes room in its spaces to accommodate different expressions of language. These are all important to keep RWA relevant to its members.

Looking at movement theory, structurally RWA has completed its

emergence phase and is in its coalescence phase which includes building leadership and setting up governance structures across its different levels. These structures are used to maintain inclusion and accountability throughout the different levels of RWA. These were necessary to inculcate its sense of shared purpose and direction, ensure ownership, and inclusive decision-making processes. It has also been intentional in inculcating feminist leadership as a core approach to its work.

Impact - What difference has the intervention made?

The evaluation found that RWA's work empowered its members to realise their **physical assets**. It is suggested that some of the members now have access to land, whether owned, leased or with usage rights, decent shelter, water and sanitation, improved access to solar as alternative energy. Land, in particular, is a resource that not only provides economic benefits but for feminist activism, is one key determinant of identity at a personal identity level beyond the name to one's domicile.

Leadership Capacity and strengthening (impact on human capital)

The evaluation found that RWA has contributed immensely to building and strengthening the leadership capacity of its members as well as managed to entrench a feminist leadership ethic amongst them at the operational and individual levels. It has built women's confidence and awakened their political consciousness. This was not just experienced by its leaders only but also members across the board. Its reflective practice enabled its members to learn, surface and unpack for themselves the nature of their own oppression, recognise power dynamics that shape this oppression and work out for themselves how they want to challenge the underlying drivers that lead to the oppression of rural women.

Social Capital

RWA has built members' **social capital by mobilising other women to join their cause as well** as reaching out to other networks in their localities and globally to advance their cause. What was of interest is mobilisation work was done by ordinary rural women and they did this systematically in ways that were true to their local realities. In the process they risked being labelled and being misunderstood. This is evidenced by the local and global solidarity networks which have cushioned women through social safety nets from natural and or manmade disasters. The social networks have been instrumental in offering the much-needed exposure and services members needed to grow their movement.

Occupation of spaces

RWA has successfully **occupied spaces as a political means to protest and make their voices heard**. This was done in ways that are creative and that attract attention. This and the other work they have done resulted in their increased visibility and recognition of RWA by various players both in their local communities and countries, regionally and at a global level; from local traditional authorities, government players in various countries, media and even from other popular movements and networks. The sterling work that RWA has been doing of breeding and saving indigenous seeds has contributed immensely towards this recognition and shift in attitude of those who were previously opposed to them.

Collective power to influence decision makers

Members successfully used their collective power and knowledge to influence decision makers in their local communities, national parliaments, at the SADC Heads of States at regional level, at the

African Union and at various UN bodies. Their efforts contributed to stronger legislative frameworks for equality and women empowerment. They have also gone beyond traditional farming to lobbying for a feminist agroecology that not only provides livelihoods but is environmentally friendly.

Growth of the movement

RWA has grown as a movement. This is evident in its numbers starting with the 250 women who attended its initial meeting, to a membership of approximately 93 000 members. Its growth is also seen in the number of country chapters it has established as well as in its agenda in ways that show the different intersections and dimensions of rural women.



Country Reports



ESWATINI

1. International Women's Day

RWA eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) celebrated International Women's Day at the industrial site with 1500 people of which women formed % of the participants. This activity was aimed at celebrating women's contribution to the country's economy, sensitise workers on GBV related issues at the workplace, the organisation's visibility and recruitment (also see below).

2. COVID-19 in Africa

The arrival of C-19 in Africa in March 2020 made our members experience tough times, for which they were not prepared. Things happened very fast and it was during harvesting time for



farmers. But farmers were not allowed to harvest their produce or go and sell these in urban areas as the governments declared tough lockdown regulations and movement restrictions, and for one to move one needed a permission letter from traditional authorities, which was also very difficult to access. Many farmers were affected by this C-19 when denied permission to sell their produce.

3. Activities done to curb the Covid-19

Through assistance from the region the organisation was able to make and distribute 200 units of sanitisers to our organisers and members, carried out by the national office. Organisers' families benefited as well as some community members as they shared these with neighbours. The organisation also sent bulk SMSs to the membership as awareness raising on the C-19 pandemic.





4. Virtual launch of the Waste Book

This activity gathered 19 women to launch the Waste Book with consisted of stories of how women contribute to environmental protection through recycling and the activities or things they make out of waste.

5. Leadership trainings of regional leaders

Three regions were trained on leadership and this was attended by 20 organisers per region. The objective was to train 60 SRWA organisers in three regions (20 per region) in order to develop multiple layers of leadership on the following sub-themes: a) Leadership (types of leadership and leadership skills); b) Organising (how to best organise rural women and girls for RWA eSwatini activities; organising working resources) and, c) Mobilising (how

to best mobilise women and girls so that they join the network).

6. Feminist schools

The organisation hosted two feminist schools. We first trained 20 members on feminist leadership, roles and democratic structures. This workshop consisted of RWA eSwatini leaders and youth and its objective was to help build the institutional capacity of the organisation. The second school was a regional feminist school which was joined virtually and focussed on /was attended by the youth.

7. Community Activities

Door to door

Door to door civic education was done in the communities by the organisers on women's rights, GBV and also raising awareness on



the C-19. This activity was implemented throughout C-19 and was a challenge during the course of the year because of the lockdown restrictions. This activity has enabled community members to gain skills on how to make simple sanitiser stands using plastic bottles, pieces of wood and strings which do not cost money, and this also enhanced hygienic practices as they are not touched by hand but are rather activated by foot. All the community houses were given that skill and the involvement of inner counsellors was a success in raising awareness and counselling on GBV during C-19. This exercise also assisted in recruiting new members for RWA eSwatini community-based associations. Other community activities included seed sharing days and women groups teaching each other income generation projects.

8. SAPSN Customary Land Right Meeting

RWA eSwatini had a meeting of 20 women coming from the four regions discussing the issue of customary land rights. The activity happened locally, face to face, where women chose to deliberate on the land issue, discussing how they would like the land policy to be amended so that it accommodates women and the girl child in a positive way. The second day was organised virtually and women joined different thematic areas and on the last day they came back into one room and joined virtually sisters from the region. Comment [DP1]: Not sure - was this a third day?

9. Traditional leaders' trainings

GBV training of traditional leaders was done in 10 communities. The objective was to train community leaders on GBV and referral mechanism so that they are able to support RWA women's groups in the community while working on such issues and treat GBV in

a sensitive way when dealing with cases of GBV. They were also sensitised on implementing the eSwatini Constitution by giving land to women without male figures; it was noted that some traditional leaders were still not aware of the provision because in 2 communities (in the Vanzini and Shiselweni region) they agreed on giving women land during the sessions.



10. Communication Audit

The impact of C-19 was hugely felt in communication as we were denied the right to meet under trees as we use to do, leaving us with no option but use other means which were very costly. Thus, we are banking on the communication audit's outcome or findings on what tools can be most effective to use during such times and how best we can communicate with our members at community level with lower costs.

11. Seed audit workshop and research

It was a very interesting and participating group of farmers of all age groups including the youth, with a wide variety of indigenous seeds and knowledge being shared among the group. This workshop also became a platform for seed sharing and recruiting, as we saw a roman catholic sister taking membership. More information was shed on seeds, including which seeds perform better in which region, the seed stories and the pride of the seed history. The enumerators, when collecting the data and visiting the farmers and savers, really enjoyed that part as they were experiencing new crops and traditional vegetables, which for some was the first time they came across them.

12. 16 Days of Activism against GBV

The organisation engaged the community during the 16 days,



through campaigns in 10 communities across the four regions of eSwatini with a target audience of 100 people per community. The main objectives of the campaign were to raise awareness in communities through marches and launch GBV committees which will work closely with traditional leaders in taking care of GBV cases.

13. Campaigns The Right to Say No

It was a very interesting workshop where we collaborated with two organisations, namely the Foundation for Socio Economic Justice (FSEJ) and Swaziland Ex-mine Workers Association (SNEMA).

International Day of Rural Women

The International Day of Rural Women was also celebrated at the Ngonini community in collaboration with Gcama mfati (a likeminded women's organisation), and also at 3 community seed sharing days (2 at Shiselweni and 1 day in Manzini) articulating the issue of indigenous seeds and access to land, as the key issues. The issue of seed banks was also elaborated on - women must be given land to produce more healthy food and multiply the indigenous seeds as the country is losing them through the actions of multi-national seed companies, which are sweeping away our own traditional seeds.

GBV dialogue

In collaboration with Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) RWA eSwatini was able to hold a GBV dialogue, inviting other organisations (men's organisations, disabled people organisations, from the LGBTQI community, church leaders, police

and individuals from the four geographic regions of eSwatini) as well as RWA organisers. The dialogue, which was attended by 60 people, was aimed at finding the root cause of abuse and further draw on actions in our different organisations on how we will work towards ending GBV.

14. Traditional Media Platforms

The organisation had access to three traditional media, namely Swazi Television, Chanel Yemaswati and eSwatini Broadcasting Information Service, focussing on the following main topics: women and C-19, GBV in the time of C-19 and land access for women.

On Radio we had three sessions under a program called *“Siyi/ wa Kanjani Lenzaba Yekubu/a/ana Egameni Lekutsandzana”* meaning “how we fight the killing of women in the name of

love”. This program has increased our visibility and also brought up many challenges for the organisation in the sense that many women are speaking out and need help, especially legal help, which the organisation does not offer.

15. Film Launch

RWA eSwatini hosted a film titled *“WE RISE FOR OUR LAND”* a film that explores land struggles in eSwatini, Mozambique and Zambia.

16. General Recommendations for the RWA eSwatini

1. RWA must have its own office for membership to be able to access it.
2. RWA must strengthen its communication taking from the communication audit's outcome.



3. The organisation must have a legal expert person.
4. RWA needs consolidation of membership data.
5. Strengthen RWA relationship with traditional media.
6. Strengthen RWA's campaigning skills.
7. Resource mobilization.

Last but not least, thank you to TCOE and our International partners for the financial support that they have given RWA eSwatini as this good work would not have been successful without their support.

MALAWI

1. Introduction

In 2020, RWA Malawi managed to work alongside its regional partners. In Malawi, the members continued to work whilst very mindful of the C-19 context and spending the first quarter of 2020 raising awareness and popularising health protocols related to C-19 requirements. The movement mobilised its members to make masks, sanitisers and water containers.

The main areas of focus were:

- Capacity Building - use of Gender Action Learning System
- Networking and Collaboration.
- Governance trainings at local level.
- Regional Coordinated Activities:
 - C-19 Awareness
 - Feminist School
 - Seed Audit
 - Climate Action
 - Communication Audit
 - E-Launch of the Waste Book



2. Training on GBV Case Management

The C-19 pandemic locked the families into their homes and for many poor households it meant women were locked up with very abusive partners. RWA Malawi focused on assisting members to develop support systems in the villages.

The other aspect linked to GBV was the fact that the economic crisis deepened poverty and increased the already high incidents of polygamy and early marriages and rape. This mobilisation, with women going to villages organising meetings and creating safe spaces for rural women assisted the movement to successfully end 18 child marriages in two regions. The campaign also targeted a partnership with the police, and this led to coordinated interventions with local village authorities, health personnel, police and schools.

3. International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day

The theme for October was: Rural Women and Girls build climate resilience. Throughout the month of October, several very localised workshops were organised to raise awareness on agroecology and the link to community resilience and climate change.

Workshops on the FISP were facilitated and the problems and challenges (particularly the systemic neoliberalism aspects of farmer subsidies, such as the type of seeds and fertilisers supplied, etc) were engaged with and farmers mobilised to expose the problems they encounter, especially the corruption.

4. Capacity building to use media

Young women were recruited to participate in media training. Women were trained to speak on the radio, make posters, writing jingles and plays for radio. Women really enjoyed this media work.



5. Networking & Collaboration at national level

RWA Malawi networked with the following organisations: OXFAM, Land Net, CEPA, UN Women, One Billion Rising.

6. Campaigns

- Taking forward the food & climate justice campaign.
- Seed audit and food sovereignty campaigns.
- Right to food campaign.
- Land rights.

MOZAMBIQUE

1. Introduction

2020 was a really difficult year and moment in Mozambique. Whilst the country was still recovering from Cyclone Idai, the country had to deal with another cyclone in 2020. The already failing infrastructure collapsed in many parts. Like elsewhere in the region, C-19 has impacted on the country at multiple levels. According to the FAO the spread of C-19 represents unprecedented shocks for Mozambique especially in relation to nutrition, food security and socio-economically, especially due to the expected loss of livelihoods and income streams. The potential for this to become a complex humanitarian tragedy is clear by the compounding effects of the health crisis on already highly vulnerable populations. In Mozambique, C-19 will affect the same communities who have barely recovered from recent major shocks such as cyclones, drought, floods and conflict, which severely affected their food security and livelihoods. In Mozambique, 1.6 million people were already estimated to be in severe acute food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] Phase 3 and above) in early

2020, prior to the onset of the pandemic. Most live in contexts of climate change and conflict and C-19 could further escalate these figures, with likely rises in humanitarian needs and food insecurity because of both the pandemic itself and containment efforts. C-19 restrictions imposed to “flatten the curve” and the spread of the virus have disrupted large parts of the food supply chain: from production to processing, packaging, transport, marketing and consumption. This has left already vulnerable populations

facing a growing reality of even further constrained access to food due to shortages, high prices and curtailed incomes, resulting in reduced purchasing power. Labour shortages will further disrupt the food supply chain, while informal workers will be hard hit by job and income losses.

2. Violence in the region

Mozambique's northern region is in bad shape. Violent insurgency that started in 2017 in the Cabo Delgado province set off a series of ongoing struggles in the region and has toppled fragile institutions and has spilt over into the neighbouring provinces of Niassa and Nampula. The United Nations estimates that 1.3 million people require humanitarian assistance in the area. Nearly 950,000 people are experiencing severe hunger. In 2020, nearly 580,000 people were forced to flee their homes amid violence that saw insurgents killing high-ranking members of the national security forces. The violence has destroyed livelihoods, disrupted markets, cholera is on the rise, and the violence has destroyed 36 percent of the area's health facilities. This region has become a war zone. Women are brutalised and it is near impossible to work in the region.

3. Progress and achievements of RWA

3.1 Dealing with the COVID pandemic

Firstly, the RWA in Mozambique participated in all the actions/activities of the RWA in the region. Early in the year soon after the regional borders were shut and restrictions imposed in Mozambique, the movement was active in raising awareness on the C-19 pandemic throughout the districts and villages where the movement is active. Over 500 masks were secured and distributed



especially to the most vulnerable women and girls. Those with HIV- AIDS were key. Boxes of soap were used to illustrate the importance of hand washing and then distributed. This was a really successful intervention.

We worked with partners and tried to use all available means to reach the remote areas, get the messages out and assist people to know that C-19 is real, not only in Europe and South Africa.

3.2 Putting Climate change at the centre

We organised a number of dialogues in many different areas on climate change. We dealt with the cycles of floods that are followed by droughts. These dialogues were prompted by the impact of severe hunger in many communities.

A dialogue with 25 leading representatives was organised to deal with the fact that rural women were cutting too many trees to make charcoal and to use as firewood. The issue had to be dealt with sensitively because women were making charcoal to earn an income for survival. We had to show the impact on the environment.

This also meant focusing on alternatives: promoting agroecology, exchange of knowledge farmer to-farmers extension support, solidarity and exchange visits as spaces for sharing.

3.3 Gender based Violence

C-19 lockdowns increased the violence and exposed households to more violence. We also had a dialogue with 200 women to discuss GBV Participants gave their testimony on how GBV has

been growing in the communities especially now with social distancing. Many girls have become pregnant because of spending too much time at home. We have also seen that large numbers of women who have lost their jobs triggering more social and economic violence because no one has an income in the homes. The informal markets and informal sectors are shut so this creates a great deal of tensions in the homes. Sadly, many women reported that there was limited support in the country to deal with GBV.

3.4 Land Policy

Mozambique launched the public hearing phase for the National Land Policy Review, which was to culminate in the amendment of the 1997 Land Law (Law no.19/97), and other laws and regulations that govern land management in the country. The National Land Policy Review process is being undertaken by the National Land Policy Review Commission or Comissao de Revisao da Politica Nacional de Terras (referred to as the Commission). While Mozambique has been widely praised for having a “progressive” land tenure framework, the National Land Policy Review was initiated to address what has been described as “rigid policies and laws” that have hindered land-based investments, particularly agro-investments and make land more transactable

The RWA is of the view that the government wanted to reduce the power of communities over land and give the state ultimate powers to decide what happens with the land, while communities will no longer have the capacity to exercise agency. At present, Mozambique’s Land Law empowers local people to participate in the management of land and other natural resources, including the allocation of rights to investors and in conflict

resolution. Private investors seeking new DUATs (Direitos de Uso e Aproveitamento, *i.e.* Rights to Use and Benefit) must consult local communities first and local people can choose to say no to land concessions and keep their rights or agree to set terms with investors.

3.4.1 Rural women say their piece

Given the state's lack of engagement with rural communities, a coalition of civil society organisations-the Mozambican Forum for Rural Women (FOMMUR), Livaningo, RWA, Forum Mulher, WiLSA, Observatorio do Meio Rural and Hikone-initiated a series of meetings with rural women in particular, to raise awareness about the National Land Policy Review and gather their perspectives on the process, their concerns, and understandings as to what this policy review means for them and the policy changes they would like to see get adopted in the policy review process.

The first meeting took place on 10 September 2020 in Maputo and brought together about 50 women. Among them were 10 representatives from the Forum Mulher (a national organisation which advocates for women's rights based in Maputo), 30 farmers from Maputo city, Inhambano and Gaza provinces from the Rural Women's Microfinance Fund (FOMMUR) and 10 representatives from other civil society organisations. In addition to raising awareness and collecting perspectives, the meeting aimed to define a rural women's political position on the current National Land Policy Review process as well as define the agenda for the World Rural Women's Day celebration, which was to be hosted by FOMMUR on the 15 October.

Also, there was a dialogue with 35 women, where issues related to land policy reform were discussed. Women do not want to lose land, the only wealth they have. There is a feeling that the Government wants to put a price on land and vulnerable people may lose their land because there is no money to buy land.

3.5 General participation in webinars and our common platform of action

- **Communications Audit**

Rwa Mozambique participated in the Communications Audit and 8 young women were part of the training on PAR for the Communication Audit. This was a really useful exercise in that the RWA in Mozambique was very insistent on the challenges of language, and making sure materials, information etc were also in Portuguese.

- **Media and the newsletter**

RWA in Mozambique participated in the production of the newsletter. It took some time for the young women to join the process of producing the monthly newsletter. It also played a role in assisting that materials and news were translated into Portuguese.

- **Seed research**

Mozambique participated in the seed research pilot. Some of the enumerators were selected and trained. The seed workshop was conducted with over 20 seed savers. This was a powerful workshop in that it started a journey that illustrated the extent of local seed saving in Mozambique. There is still a great deal to

do especially in relation to verifying the seeds and engaging with policy environment.

- **Feminist School**

The Feminist School was once again an extremely popular event in our calendar. 10 women participated on the Feminist School where issues of GBV, early marriage and patriarchy were discussed. Women from RWA Mozambique joined hands with many other RWA women from across the region. Materials were translated for use by the Mozambique sisters.

- **Launch of the documentary:**

The RWA Mozambique played an active role in the launch of the

documentary on land in Southern Africa, titled “We rise for our Land”. This was a well-attended film premiere. Many women joined the viewing and it unlocked a great deal of conversation.

NAMIBIA

The main goal of the project is “To amplify rural women’s voices in Namibia.” This is intended to be achieved through the following two objectives:

- Strengthen the voice, organise and visibility of women.
- Advocate for a more enabling environment for improved food security for rural women in Namibia.

1. Developing a Facebook page, Twitter and website for

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to land • Gender based violence • High unemployment rate • Removal of Grade 10 from combined schools thus leading to school dropouts and teenage pregnancy • Alcohol abuse by women • Drought • Rape and passion killings • Divorce • Lack of skills development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disowning widows of their marital properties • Low literacy rate among rural women • High rate of school dropouts • Lack of access to market to sell products produced by rural women • Human trafficking (especially in Tsmukwe Constituency) • Lack of access to finance • Lack of access to water
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RWA Namibia

One way of helping RWA Namibia is to have its own unique online identity and to also be able to connect and market itself with the

rest of the world. In February 2020 the website for NRWA was developed. Please, see the following link to the website:

<https://www.namibianruralwomensassembly.org/>

2. Registration of RWA Namibia as a Trust

In order to enable RWA visibility and legal recognition, a meeting was facilitated between members of the steering committee, where RWA chose to be registered as a trust with the power vested in members.

3. Impact of COVID-19 on rural women in Namibia

Like any other country on the globe, Namibia has also not been spared the wrath of the C-19 epidemic. Though the country had at the time registered only 16 imported cases, the government had to take serious measures to prevent local/community transmission. Some of the measures included: declaring a seven months state of emergency, 38-day full country lockdown, social distancing, closure of schools and all border entry points, etc. All this had a great impact on rural women in several different ways:

- Most rural women are always involved in some form of small informal businesses in their localities like selling kapana/cooked food. However, all this had to stop, thus reducing daily household income.
- Women involved in crop farming found themselves helpless as by March most crops were ready for harvesting but farmers could not hire casual labour to assist with the harvesting. Besides there was no market to sell the fresh produce, so some crops rotted in the fields leading to the loss of much needed income.
- Some rural women in Erongo and Kunene regions are involved in craft making and selling but due to border closures no more tourists are coming, leaving these women without any source of income.

- The prolonged closure of schools is another headache for rural women as now government is talking about e-learning to keep the system alive. However most rural areas lack conducive infrastructure such as network connections and electricity. Again, parents cannot afford radios, televisions, computers or smart phones and do not know how to use them to be able to help their children with schoolwork.
- Lack of clean portable water and proper sanitation facilities in many rural areas makes difficult for women to maintain some of the preventative measures recommended by the WHO such as regular hand washing; there was also a scarcity of sanitisers.

However, all is not lost because rural women have embarked on measures to mitigate the impact of C-19; some of these include:

- Designing and distributing awareness raising materials to



sensitise fellow rural women on how C-19 is spread and how it can be prevented.

- Teaching households on how to improvise in the absence of running water and sanitisers.
- Assisting fellow women to apply for the N\$750.00 emergency income grant (EIG) extended by the government as a relief to informal business people that had lost income due to lockdown.
- Some RFPs have liaised with their constituency councillors and traditional authorities and managed to secure food parcels for distribution to vulnerable rural households (mainly women headed households).
- As the government has declared the wearing of face masks mandatory, those rural women skilled in tailoring have been mobilised to start manufacturing masks to distribute/sell to the communities.
- The RWA Namibia steering committee made an effort to write a proposal to the regional RWA and managed to secure N\$30,000.00, which has been used to buy soap, sanitisers and materials that can be used to make masks for distribution to members in the fourteen regions.
- Also, as a way of keeping the project activities alive during the lockdown, each RFP was assigned tasks that can be done in the comfort of one's home. These included: updating the regional members' list, compiling a regional activity progress report, carrying out some research on women and other general community-based organisations (CBOs) in

the regions, etc.

4. Strengthening relationship between NRWA leadership to link up with relevant ministries and other civil society organisations

At the national level, the steering committee together with the office administrator paid courtesy visits to various stakeholders as a way of introducing the organisation and also to engage them on potential opportunities for cooperation and networking. The following partners were visited during this reporting period:

- **Ministry of Poverty Eradication & Social Welfare (MPESW)**

Last year the RWA Namibia team paid a call to the MPESW; here they met with the Director of Policy and Strategy. She briefed



the team on the main activities of the Ministry, which are to initiate, implement and coordinate social development programs aimed at promoting the well-being of all Namibians. She also pointed out that currently there are no direct collaborating platforms with their Ministry but she will add RWA Namibia on their partner list so that whenever there are important stakeholder meetings RWA can be invited to attend.

- **Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)**

RWA Namibia's team visited the FAO office and met with the country's resident representative that was very impressed by the presentation given by the RWA team. She informed the team that rural women are one of the constituencies that FAO works with, so there are many opportunities for collaboration, especially in the area of capacity building regarding agricultural matters.

- **National Youth Council (NYC)**

RWA Namibia's team visited the NYC and met with the director who was very excited to know more about RWA Namibia. She briefed the team on the activities of the NYC and how the RWA can collaborate with them. She advised the team to open a desk/database for the youth if RWA has young women members.

5. NRWA participation in the 05th annual session of the Rural Women Parliament (RWP)

As another way to profile the organisation, two RWA Namibia steering committee members (national coordinator and secretary) participated in the 5th session of the RWP held by the government of Namibia, whose theme was "Empowering rural women for sustainable livelihood".

6. Marketing RWA Namibia to the regional political leadership

At regional level, some regional focal persons (RFPs) from regions like Otjozondjupa, Zambezi and Oshana managed to meet with their regional political leaders such as governors, councillors, and traditional authorities to promote RWA, which created an enabling environment for mobilising and recruiting more women to join the organisation. The regional political leadership has applauded RWA Namibia for reaching the government half-way in elevating the rural woman; it therefore pledged to involve RWA Namibia representatives in all regional programs.

7. Mobilising and registering of members

Some regions like Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, Kunene, Otjozondjupa and Zambezi have put a lot of effort in the



mobilisation and registration of members, so that currently the RWA Namibia paid-up membership has risen from 600 to 1600 members.

The Erongo region has also been very busy with mobilisation meetings, such as the meeting on 12th February 2020 in Otjimbingwe, during which the RFP explained to the attendees the process of becoming a RWA Namibia member. The meeting was attended by 56 rural women of whom 20 became fully paid up members that very day. The women also managed to elect a constituency focal person (CFP) to assist the RFP. The meeting was blessed with the presence of the Hon. Melanie Ndjago (Karibib Constituency Councillor), who gave the opening remarks.

8. Identifying and training rural women constituency focal persons

For the project to embark on a decentralisation strategy, there was a need to capacitate women at constituency level, who again could go back to their respective areas to sensitise and mobilise more women to join RWA Namibia. Thirty-five rural constituencies were identified in the 6 regions (Erongo, Omusati, Oshana, Kavango East, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa) from which each constituency had to delegate two capable paid-up members to the regional trainings. Between June and September 2019, a total of 6 regional workshops were conducted and 69 rural women were trained to go back to their constituencies to sensitise others. The 69 women were trained in raising awareness on human rights, especially women's rights, sensitising others about RWA and mobilising more members, assessing the food security and advocacy issues affecting rural women in their respective constituencies. During the training, the following were highlighted by the trainees as some of the main issues faced by rural women:

At the end of the trainings, participants came up with possible



scheduled activities to be carried out in their respective constituencies. Some of these included workshops, sensitisation and mobilisation meetings, awareness raising sessions, etc. To enable the trained CFPs to execute their planned activities successfully, each trainee group was provided with guidelines and materials to use.

9. Leadership and communication: Tools for activist leaders' workshop

This two-day leadership and communication workshop was organised and funded by TCOE. It was facilitated by Mo Salomon between the 23rd and 24th April 2019 and was attended by the RWA Namibia steering committee and the regional focal persons. The main aim of the workshop was to equip the participants with better leadership and communication skills and tools for the good management of RWA Namibia.

10. Growing the RWA in Namibia

10.1 Erongo rural women receive goats from Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF)

As a way to help vulnerable rural households, the MAWF introduced a scheme known as the “Small Stock Development & Distribution to Communal Areas” (SSDDCAS) capital project. The main aim of the scheme is to provide quality core breeding flock of suitable goats to selected households (especially female headed ones) to enable them to have sustainable means of income generation and enhanced food and nutrition security, while improving their social and economic well-being. Thus, in March 2020, two of NRWA members from the Daures Constituency were among the proud beneficiaries in the region as they received 20 goats and 1 ram from the scheme.

10.2 The multiplying effect of the work of constituency focal persons

Through the training of 69 CFPs, who went back to their communities and sensitised and mobilised others, more than 1000 rural women were capacitated to be able to tell their story, how they want it to be written, and identify issues affecting them that need some advocacy -for example, the “removal of Grade 10 from combined schools”, the “disowning of widows” and “lack of rural women representation on region political structures” to mention but a few.

With the challenges presented by C-19, such as the closure of face to face schooling and its replacement with e-learning, rural women whose children are highly impacted by this new scenario have been mobilised and encouraged to pressurise government to put proper infrastructure in place before rolling out the e-learning model.

As mentioned above, women identified several issues during the 6 regional workshops to decentralise NRWA (please see the Table above). However, there is a need to do some groundwork before embarking on advocacy campaigns: sensitising the women and bringing them together in gatherings where they are able to discuss and agree on the issues and the next steps to take. Plans are also in place to sensitise them on how to link up with other mind-like organisations to support advocacy ideas.

The campaigns will start in the first quarter of 2021. Also plans are underway for RWA Namibia to strengthen its role and voice in influencing the land reform agenda for the benefit of rural women. This is expected to be planned and carried out in collaboration with the Civil Society Working Group on Land Reform (CSWG-LR).

11. Organising our congress

The highlight of the 2020 year was the decision to organise our congress, taking time to bring members together to review the organisation's gains and speak about renewal of leadership. The congress was extremely successful and has certainly assisted to elect new leaders and develop strategies for the period ahead.

12 Lessons learned

From this project, we have learnt the following:

More decentralising of the activities/ using a bottom top approach can enhance the achievement of the intended results. This has been proven by the training of the CFPS focal persons who also went back to their constituencies to sensitise and mobilise other women thus raising the number of paid-up members from 600 to 1600.

Also plans are under way to organise regional exchange visits to enable women to learn from each other, e.g. women from Erongo region to visit those in north central and vice versa.

It will enhance the sustainability of the organisation if RWA Namibia gets itself registered as this will open many windows of opportunity in terms of funding and recognition.

There is also a need to establish partnerships with various



stakeholders as some can assist with needed technical support and others in sharing and learning from their experiences.

For future projects more attention will be given to those regions and constituencies that are serious with member recruitment and activity implementation, and also to ensure that young people are encouraged to join the organisation.

The original idea of working with all the 14 regions at the same pace has been stopped as now the project is more focused on those that have shown they are serious. The project has embraced a bottom-top approach that is working more with women at constituency and village level.

The big turnout of almost 100 women at the north central regional feedback meeting, despite the looming drought and other challenges, shows that rural women see RWA Namibia as a platform that could change their lives for the better. Again, through RWA, rural women have been able to interact and exchange ideas with others locally, regionally, national and internationally. However, members feel there is a need to motivate young women to join RWA Namibia as the majority of the current membership are within the age range of 49 years and above, which curtails development and sustainability.

SOUTH AFRICA

1. Overview

Our membership consists of largely of rural women producers, farmers and fishers. RWA South Africa has its presence in the following provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape.

After the 10-year anniversary of the RWA in 2019, the movement as well as the local chapters set strong goals for the year 2020. Of course, with the advent of C-19, a lot of what were “normal” modes of operation were disrupted by subsequent lockdowns, marked by loss of life and livelihood amongst other challenges.

C-19 has significantly changed our current context and the manner in which we work, live and organise. The past year has illustrated

the fluidity of the moment and highlighted the deep fault lines that exist in South Africa.

The lockdown has also illuminated how the spatial, economic and social inequalities which were characteristic features of the apartheid period have persisted in post-apartheid South Africa, the depth of which are deeply entrenched through historical



structural and systematic conditions. The spread of C-19 moved fast and furious gripping South African society and the ever-increasing infections and deaths related to C-19 are still alarming. While we are rightly concerned by the uncertainty that surrounds us, the fears and anxiety that are experienced, particularly how the pandemic will impact the movements and communities, are real.

As the lockdown in South Africa continues and society is called

on to unite to fight the pandemic together, the burden of mass poverty, unemployment and inequality is carried by the few that have jobs. However, in 2020 the lockdown confined everyone to their homes/ shelters. Most of the poor households plunged further into debt as they had to support many more throughout the days and months, with food. This had serious implications for vulnerable groups, including rural women, farm workers and farm dwellers, where resources are scarce.

The impact of the lockdown on rural and farmworker women has been multiple in that women are often the main providers of income and livelihoods and in the lockdown period, the restrictions have meant an inability to earn a livelihood through agricultural production, informal trading of produce or selling of food, etc. But what is also a major concern is the violence that women and children have been experiencing during this period. Access to support and even protection orders are extremely challenging.

2. Lockdowns due to COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated Gender Based Violence and Femicide against women and children

Gender Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) became prevalent among already vulnerable groups in the communities. Marginalised groups such as rural women, farmworker women and LGBTQI communities increasingly became the targets of ruthless violent attacks, rape and killings. Many of the rural communities did not have access to shelters, support and decent livelihoods and were forced to endure abusive relationships at the hands of perpetrators. Despite these hurdles, the women in the RWA of South Africa worked alongside one another to deliver on some of the goals and achieved well in very difficult

circumstances.

As challenging as the year was, RWA SA made tremendous contribution towards movement building and this report will highlight some of the activities in the country, some of the challenges faced by the movement in South Africa, as well as the lessons we will be taking forward into the new year of movement building and strengthening. We had to be innovative and find new ways of working ensuring that the movement stays alive and focused despite the pandemic. New forms of organising and capacity building workshops were largely done through a hybrid model of engaging - using both physical meetings in conjunction with virtual engagement, guided by and observing the C-19 regulations.

A land conference was earmarked for the year and this was not realised due to lockdown, but it may be considered in a hybrid model with a few online and offline programmatic components. The lockdown kicked in whilst RWA-SA were busy with preparations for the national seminar on women and land. As physical gatherings were prohibited, the event had to be cancelled. However, having hosted an online Feminist School, RWA SA has the ability and possibility to earmark a seminar of this level to be done in the hybrid model previously mentioned.

3. Key achievements

3.1 A strong focus on Gender Based Violence and launching a SMS Helpline

The SMS helpline, aimed at building and enhancing the RWA SA work on the ground to support GBV victims and survivors, was launched. Further, the helpline assisted in reporting and providing support to distressed rural women who were under lockdown, C-19 stressed relations, in abusive relationships and knew of someone impacted by GBV.



Many of the rural and farmworker women do not have access to smart phones which require connectivity of a different level. Therefore, SMS is one of the dominant ways of communication used by rural communities. August was identified as the month of action that virtually launched the SMS helpline which broadcasted to 100 women, with 35 logged in links and 80 viewing over Facebook live. The recording of the event on Facebook had 204 views. The event, which

was a speak-out, was powerful yet very tough; women shared their personal experiences with GBV and these are collectively being drawn up into a book. The event also had poetry and music renditions as part of its agenda of creating a space for women to voice their struggles.

Preceding the launch there were a series of provincial and national

strategic meetings hosted virtually to define a strategy towards the ever-growing incidents of GBV and femicide in South Africa. These provincial meetings listed certain actions the collective would participate in. In the Free State an interactive workshop focused on issues of GBV affecting the LGBTQI community as well as young women. From these strategic events the sisters created a theme and a t-shirt design called "Breaking the Ice". All provinces conducted a number of activities including education and awareness on C-19, trainings on agroecology, women's rights, soap making, setting up soup kitchens, providing women with information on helplines to assist in time of emergency, such as lifelines to the police, shelters, Lifeline, depression and anxiety, etc. Collectively the RWA-SA constituency developed and issued a statement against femicide.

3.2 Access to land and food sovereignty- addressing increasing hunger

RWA SA assisted women with food baskets, seeds and seedlings. We embarked on a food sovereignty drive educating and promoting household gardens and agricultural activities. This initiative led to an increase in number of households growing their own food.

Annual International Rural Women's Day (IRWD) and World Food Day (WFD) events were localised, shifting away from big events to smaller local and provincial gatherings. The moment was used to garner for access to land once more, pushing the "one woman one-hectare campaign". Across the active provinces, events were hosted within C-19 Regulations. The images are beautiful, and the outcome of the event was to be visible and create collective demands and highlight some of the issues that became exacerbated by C-19.

RWA SA participated on a march to parliament organised by Women on Farms to demand land for women. Each province held different events to commemorate the women's month. Certainly, there was nothing to celebrate in the midst of the scourge of gender based violence in the country. For example: the Free State (FS) province held a speak-out online webinar where victims shared their painful experiences and there were also motivational speakers to counsel and give hope to the women of the country. The Western Cape (WC) organised massive education and awareness on gender based violence linked to abuse of women by intimate partners and also highlighted the plight of LGBTI in the province. In the Eastern Cape (EC) RWA, in partnership with FAIVISA, organised an agroecology training targeting poor women and survivors of gender based violence. Mobilisation took place in the villages around Keiskammahoek area and 67 women joined the movement on the day. Different topics were addressed including seed collection, multiplication and saving, land and climate justice.

3.3 Campaigns, Advocacy and Organising: One Woman, One Hectare campaign

This campaign was taken up resulting in 65 hectares of land acquired: 40 hectares in the FS and 25 hectares in EC provinces, respectively, to be used for agricultural hubs. A new community garden project "Abalimi Abatsha" for young women farmers aged between 26-33 years, was established in Stutterheim. In other provinces women lobbied for access to use of land in schools and clinics.

RWA SA has been in the forefront of the struggle against the passing into the law of the Traditional and Khoi-SAN Leadership Act and of the Traditional Courts Bill - regulating customary laws. Several activities such as marches, picketing and other methods

of engagement were implemented to raise women's voices on their objection to the Bill. RWA- SA have identified civil society organisations and other institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality and the Office of the Public Protector as partners in advancing and protecting women's rights. Some inroads have been made with chiefs in the E.C. in the Buffalo Municipality and Fort Murray where land was acquired by rural women after months of deliberations with the traditional councils.

We adopted 365 Days of Activism against GBV through a social media campaign of sharing insights and reports on our Facebook page to make sure the rural women remain centralised and that women, children and members of the LGBTQI do not drop off the national agenda. Different provinces engaged in different forms of activities and programs as an effort to deal with gender based violence which included picketing, speak-outs, drive by road



shows, marches outside courts and in the streets in support of victims, distribution of information stickers on the SMS helpline and pamphlets, as well as government engagements.

Some of the focal areas of work included work centred on building second layers of leadership across active provinces. 58 new members, mostly young women, were established into a branch structure in Section E in Botshabelo in the FS, and this is a feature that continued throughout the month in that province. We have also seen this deepening of leadership in the Northern Cape during the months of September and October resulting in a new layer of representatives.

3.4 The C-19 Solidarity Fund

This fund was established in April 2020 in collaboration with other organisations aimed at raising awareness and funds towards support for young women, fisher women, women farm workers and dwellers, women in rural communities and mining affected women. Part of this drive was to drive awareness to how women are impacted greatly by the advent of C-19 and the subsequent lockdowns.

At the time the lockdown was at stage 5, the strictest form of the C-19 lockdown regulations. Access to sanitary wear and basic hygiene items were near impossible with no income and this led to the collection and distribution of dignity packs across the country. Food parcels were also distributed along with seeds and seedlings to start community and home gardens. In some areas soup kitchens were also established to support the hungry. Continuous education and awareness on C-19 were held through WhatsApp conversations and Zoom meetings.

The EC and FS RWA began their processes of opening

bank accounts towards membership fees and other resource mobilisations approaches.

4. Virtual events attended

- Regional launch of the 'Re-Imagining Waste' book on the 13 June.
- Participation on the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) debate - a farmer from the EC represented RWA SA very well on the regional webinar on FISP during the women's month, on 1 August 2020.
- RWA-SA also participated in the SAPSN meeting discussions, where the Regional RWA led a panel discussion on the "No to Corporate Capture of Agriculture" on 20 August 2020.
- Study circles were conducted virtually, each province focusing on different themes but gender based violence was the critical point of focus for collective planning and action. Access to land and food sovereignty were amongst focus topics during this period (food systems and healthy eating). Soap-making was amongst other trainings conducted.
- Launch of the 'WE RISE FOR OUR LAND' film as launched from one of the featured countries, eSwatini, with a virtual screening of the film across the region. This is a useful tool for engaging on women and land. The other countries featured in this film are Zambia and Mozambique - many lessons were drawn, and the film was used to stimulate discussion amongst women groups.
- The Annual Feminist School was a hybrid methodology

meeting which took place both physically (in the participating countries) and with a few online components. 20 RWA South Africa members converged in one venue while others joined virtually.

5. Areas needing strengthening

Some critical learnings included how to continue movement building across virtual platforms. This was successful for the most part, but the bigger call is to create a ***communications strategy*** that is effective across all mediums of communication within the regulations of the C-19 that hovers over our daily lives and operations. A strong mix between WhatsApp, email, Facebook as well as face-to-face and Zoom meetings are encouraged as means to continue with our strategies and activities.

Forming partnerships with churches and schools as well as other organisations to reach more members and strengthen our base is critical. This is especially important in the drive to popularise the ***SMS Helpline*** and making it a service both at local and national levels.

A focus of the new year will be to deepen the ***leadership and membership*** base for stronger representation in local and national meetings. Deepening the roots is a theme we will lead in the coming year. This means launching structures, similar to what we saw in the Northern Cape and the Free State. In August, we lost the leadership of the Eastern Cape Coordination and this has left a vacuum in the province. This will be one of the priorities in the new year.

Continued capacity building is part of the annual plan and the ***skills audit*** identified other capacities needing development for

the national leadership and at country level. Linked to capacity building, is the creation of manuals and developing materials and curricula for various trainings.

6. Conclusion

2020 came with a lot of challenges and new forms of organising had to be adopted and applied. Virtual means of communication were used strategically bringing the national constituencies closer and strengthening RWA-SA at local and national levels. A stronger base also means establishing even stronger local and district forums aimed at building a strong national chapter.

ZAMBIA

1. Introduction

Guided by its theme *“Land, love and life”*, the overall objective of RWA is to build linkages and strengthen the self-organisation of rural women involved in the defence of the commons (land, sea, seeds, water and our eco-system). To achieve its goal, RWA builds the voice and visibility of marginalised rural women through mobilising and advocating for alternatives that support sustainable food sovereignty, climate justice and rural livelihoods.

In Zambia, RWA's activities include:

- Establishment of indigenous seed banks for preservation of the local gene-pool.
- Showcase agroecology and promote sustainable rural livelihoods through annual agriculture shows, annual seed and food fairs.
- Promote young women's skills development (mainly media,

advocacy etc.).

- Engage political leadership on issues of women's land rights, seed rights, climate justice, gender equality and agricultural support in community focus areas.
- Organise annual feminist schools.
- Organise an annual assembly coinciding with the SADC Heads of State Summit.
- Mobilise women's participation in International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day.
- COP - Climate engagements/ meetings.
- Campaigns on seed and food sovereignty.
- Monitor state performance on the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, the African Union Gender Policy and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

2. COVID-19 and RWA Zambia

Last year, like elsewhere in the region, the RWA Zambia struggled to meet all its objectives and really expand the movement as we intended. However, with the support of RWA Regionally, we managed to raise awareness of C-19, health protocols and general ways of behaving. We also made masks and we illustrated how to make soap and containers for water sanitisers. We also managed to have resources to distribute food hampers and rations especially to the elderly and very poor households.

We also tried to develop the capacity of members in the remote rural areas to use the technology to join meetings (zoom Webinars etc).

3. Alternative Mining Indaba

Luckily, for RWA Zambia, several of the leadership travelled to South Africa in February 2020 before C-19 hit our shores, to participate in the annual parallel Alternative Mining Indaba.

The RWA Zambia wanted to draw attention to the situation in the Copperbelt of Zambia and also be in dialogue with SADC mining affected communities around the Right to Say No campaign and deepen their understanding of the Right to Say No and how to advance this campaign in Zambia.

The RWA members highlighted the destruction by mining companies, the impact on houses next to the mines and the loss of arable land.

4. Right to Seed workshop and Training of Trainers

4.1 Background to the campaign, advocacy and lobby for the right to seed

Poverty is an issue of deprivation created by a number of factors,

including lack of land, capital and production resources. It is also caused by restrictions in accessing seed and other planting materials. For rural women who usually have free access to land, the major constraint is lack of capital to access seed and other planting materials. This has been exacerbated by high prices, limited availability, poor recyclability and lack of promotional and multiplication efforts by research institutions.



It is against this background that RWA would like to campaign, advocate and lobby for preservation and conservation of indigenous food genetic resources for future generations as a way to empower women to have voice over their economic and seed inheritance for the betterment of their families and their communities. This report

highlights the delivery process in Training-of Trainers (ToTs).

4.2 Training outline

The trainings were conducted in Lufunsa/Chongwe, Monze, Chibombo and Mumbwa. The training targeted members of Chongwe RWA (Chongwe/Lufunsa), National Union of Small-Scale Farmers (Chibombo) and Pelum Zambia (Mumbwa).

The training was delivered in a participatory manner following a predesigned training programme. One of the questions raised was: "Has there been any problem in terms of losing some

seeds?”. Farmers in Mumbwa listed a number of seeds (crops) they can no longer find as indicated in (Table 2). Alongside the lost seeds, indigenous knowledge regarding production, preservation and propagation has also been lost.

The workshop spoke about lost seeds and many stories were shared about this. With this understanding of lost seeds, farmers shared the importance and necessity to conserve, own and preserve their own seeds. Seed security is equal to food security - a family with no seed would not be able to talk of having food security in future.

However, the right to seeds sounds complicated and needed to be unbundled. To enhance understanding, participants were



asked to list down the rights they need within the context of the right to seeds. Reference was made to the display of indigenous seeds at the training session.

Through discussion, participants indicated the right to:

- Recognise indigenous seeds as foundation seeds.
- Sell, produce and store their own seeds.
- Right to exchange their own produced seed.
- Patent and recognise indigenous knowledge on seeds.
- Protect seeds against biotechnology and other external gene-pools that have an effect on local seed genotypes.
- Control and monitor the growth of the local seed industry.
- Make decisions regarding the seeds relevant to food security and rural communities.

5. Gender Base Violence

This aspect of the work received a great deal of attention. The movement used the 16 days of activism against GBV to really go out to the rural areas. Use of media such as radio, distribution of pamphlets and fact sheets played a key role.

Women from areas such as Lufwanyana and Kalulushi districts went from village to village. We were able to gain new members who wanted our T-shirts and assisted us with the sensitising work.

6. Practical sessions

We organised workshops on bio-fertilisers, green charcoal and agroecology. Some of these were virtual workshops. We also joined with ZAAB (Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity). We displayed our seeds and produce.

7. International Rural Women's Day and World Food Day:

In Zambia, we had two events happening in tandem- one in Ndola and the other in the Monze District. The time together was used to share more on issues of Gender Based Violence as well as on Land and Seeds. The women shared their stories and experiences of GBV and also information on the many forms it takes and support they can seek out. In the Monze District where the focus was centred on seed multiplication. After all the sharing of seeds, the women also shared videos celebrating International Day of Rural Women with song and dance.

The month of October was really a very good moment. We mobilised our members and organised a wide range of actions. The main focus was on seeds and food. However, we also worked on the issue of climate change especially given the fact that we have experienced repeated extreme events of droughts and floods, and higher temperatures. Rainfall has declined over the decades with alternating events of heavy rainfall. Climate change is major threat to sustainable development in Zambia.

8. Joining in the Southern Africa RWA programmes and platforms:

RWA Zambia joined hands with the RWA movement in Southern Africa by participating actively in SAPSN seminars, workshops and meetings. Here the FISP workshop was viewed by everyone as really important- hundreds of women joined the webinar and testified about the challenges of FISP in the region.

RWA Zambia also organised the members to participate in the Feminist School, the screening of the documentary and the launch of the booklet on Waste.

9. Seed research

During the last quarter of 2020, the work on the seed audit really got off the ground in Zambia. The leadership selected the primary researcher and also the enumerators. The workshop was organised in November and was really a very powerful display of the seeds and the indigenous knowledge that rural women have about their seeds.



ZIMBABWE

1. Introduction

2020 was a year that was characterised by triple crises in the manner of climate change, C-19 and the deepening poverty. Despite all odds pitied against them, the RWA members managed to meet and conduct activities as per plan in the country chapter. The activities were conducted following and complying with the WHO guidelines and the Ministry of Health guidelines.

2. The following is a summary of the activities conducted in 2021

2.1 Communication Audit

The Zimbabwean chapter participated in the Regional organised communication audit process which started with training 130 women on participatory research and then ended with data collection from 2500 members. The process was meant to assess how the movement's information flow was like at that point and assess the existing communication strategy to come up with an effective communications strategy that ensures effective top- bottom and bottom-up communication. The same audit also resulted in RWA Zimbabwe coming up with strong and convenient means of communication that allowed flow of information from bottom up and vice versa. The use of phone calls, WhatsApp, Facebook and mostly SMEs was adopted to make sure that each and every member gets information relating to RWA's work and programmes.

2.2 Launch of the Waste Book and screening of "WE RISE FOR OUR LAND"

Through the support received from the regional office, 15 sisters in Zimbabwe converged at WLZ office for the Waste

Book Launch and 10 women connected from their areas. This activity strengthened solidarity among the regional sisters who have not been able to meet physically due to C-19 related travel restrictions. The Zimbabwean sisters had an opportunity to learn and share on other waste uses from the other sisters from the



region. The activity reinforced the sisters and gave a lot of hope that despite facing multi challenges, RWA remains committed to speak on issues relating to women in the rural areas.

Another live streaming activity was organised for women to watch the launch of the film 'WE RISE FOR OUR LAND'. The film gave hope to the other Zimbabwean sisters who are still fighting for their right to land that it is possible

as they saw some of their sisters rising and succeeding in the struggle for land.

2.3 FISP as a Speak out 0774231818

Fifteen(15)Zimbabweansistersalso participated in theFarmer Input Subsidy Programme Speak Out where the regional sisters spoke about changes and shifts in country level support to agriculture and FISP. The other objective of the meeting was to understand what has transpired and how the SADC Secretariat understands these changes and also to hear about policy changes or stimulus packages underway for small-scale producers and farmers. RWA

Zimbabwe also shared on how the programme was implemented in the country and gave the following recommendations for the success of the programme:

- Zimbabwean Government needs to consider investing in other farming needs like irrigation infrastructure.
- Ministry of Agriculture to consult farmers on their needs based on ecological zones.
- Government needs to address issues of corruption, which is rampant.
- Dealing with militarisation of the programme will boost investor confidence in the sector.

2.4 SADC People's Summit

Twenty five [15 at the office, 10 from communities] Zimbabwe sisters participated in the virtual People's Summit from the 18th to the 20th of August 2020. The People's Summit was running under the theme "Towards a people centred post-C-19 recovery plan for Southern Africa". RWA friends like Msasa, Gender and Peace, Security Network were invited to join RWA for the different sessions organised. Some members, government stakeholders and funding partners connected virtually from their respective areas. Discussions were centred on the socio- economic effects of marginalised communities, seeds, GBV and women who attended shared their experiences. The sisters also participated on the day 2 of the workshop running under the theme "No to Corporate Capture of Agriculture".

The following is a summary of the voices of women:

- Government, through its agriculture department, should increase awareness in the use of our indigenous and neglected seeds.

- Easy access of these seeds would go a long way in ensuring food and nutrient security for most rural households as experience has shown that one can have a good harvest with these seeds and organic fertilisers, as compared to hybrids.
- Training rural women farmers on seed selection, multiplication, and post-harvest handling to maintain seeds.
- Seed banks should be established at village level to safeguard our seeds in case of adverse weather conditions.



2.6 Gender Based Violence

- Three activities on anti-GBV campaigns were carried out in the Nyanga district (Ward 15 and Ward 23). The activity reached out to 60 women and 25 men. The Theme of the Campaign was: *"Walk in Her Shoes, Carry Her Load"* and the main objective of the theme was to highlight the unpaid labour of women

and the multiple injustices that women suffer including GBV. To drive this theme home, one of the campaign activities was for men to wear ladies high heel shoes and carry 20l buckets of water and walk 50m. This provided a lighter moment as men struggled to walk in heels and carry the water buckets yet it was a poignant moment which provided key learning points. The ensuing discussions saw participants particularly men appreciating the triple gender roles of women and the multiple injustices that they face.

- **Speak-Outs:** Women shared their stories of abuse. The campaigns resulted in the identification of GBV Champions Volunteers who will continue to raise community awareness around GBV. The GBV champions will participate in village assembly meetings and use these platforms to speak about GBV.

2.7 Seed Audit



- The seed audit workshop was conducted at Chibhanguza Conference Centre on 27 November 2020. The workshop gave the Zimbabwean sisters an opportunity to take stock of the traditional seeds that are still in existence, to see how these seeds are being kept, to see where the present seeds originated from, to take account and keep record of the existing seeds.
- The rural women distinguished between indigenous and adopted seeds. Participants demonstrated a high level of understanding and clearly articulated the importance of indigenous seeds to them as women. The rural women came out with the seed list and the seed varieties still existing in Zimbabwe. Women were encouraged to meet and share seeds and if given a chance to cook some of the produces for testing before ploughing certain seeds. At the end of the workshop the sisters shared their seeds.

2.8 District Rural Women's Assembly meetings

- Every year Zimbabwe conducts a National meeting where rural women meet to share, discuss and strategise how they are going to tackle problems they will be facing, engage policy makers who will be invited guests at the event (these guests will be invited for a very specific reason) and for solidarity purposes. In 2020 due to C-19, we had to down scale the event to district meetings with fewer people. 7 district meetings were conducted in Bubi, Gwanda, Nkayi, Gweru, Makonde, Wedza and Makoni. At these meeting women shared with the policy makers present how they were affected by C-19 and how it increased the labour burden for women. Some women indicated that the travel restrictions resulted in post-harvest losses, to some it increase GBV and

the travelling became very expensive so that they made losses when marketing their products/wares.

MADAGASCAR

Madagascar has been enduring a harsh lockdown since March 2020. This meant that the sisters in the towns could not reach the membership in the most rural spaces. Technology was leveraged to create dialogue between the two groups and to keep the movement in Madagascar as democratic and as functional as possible. Some of the events Madagascar participated in is as follows:

1. Launch of the Re-imagining Waste Book Launch



The virtual launch of the Waste Booklet was one of the first virtual events for the RWA. For the members on Madagascar, most could not join through zoom and could also not physically meet, but the sisters had great connectivity to the Facebook Livestream and about 5 joined through the livestream and shared the recording after the launch, while there were 3 others logged into the zoom call. Another consistent challenge is that of language and translations. Madagascar has Magalasy and French as official languages and before the advancement of ZOOM and its capabilities (with translation capacities) this was not always available and distractive. This issue is not fully resolved but on the table to have a translator at each of the events for 2021.

2. Farmer Input Subsidy Programmes webinar

For this event we had representatives from across the SADC region participating in the call which resolved to keep governments accountable to FISP agreements and also tabulate the number of rural women members have access to the FISP benefit. The RWA Madagascar chapter participated with a country chapter input which was collated on a strategic action plan for the region, authored by RWA and the inputs from our Reference Group and other alliances.

3. Corporate Capture Dialogues

Vola Andriamanantena Soa, one of our Reference Group sisters from Madagascar, facilitated the session on 'Disaster Capitalism: the case of the Oil Spill', a discussion RWA hosted in partnership with the People's Coalition and the Right to Say No Campaign. This was also one of the only conversations Mauritius had taken part in and where RWA sisters shared videos in solidarity with the national protests in Mauritius. This event took place during

the Southern African People's Solidarity Network (SAPSN) that gathers development NGOs and institutions, many civil society organisations such as trade unions, churches, community-based movements.

4. Climate Change protest

On the 25 October, the Madagascan sisters had a protest to bring awareness to the country about Climate change on the International Day for Climate Action. They were the only chapter to make an action on this particular day for the region, with over 100 women joining this action and many men wanting to also

engage on the issue of building climate resilience.

5. International Day of the Rural Woman and World Food Day

Madagascar had two events over two days. On October 15th the focus of the event was on capacity building on organic and agro-ecological agriculture and on a culinary art workshop and exhibition highlighting local and organic products. On actual World Food day, October 16th, the leadership hosted a public march as well as a workshop-debate on the right to food and the right to production. All of the events took place in Fiaferana, in the Analamanga region.



6. Mask Mondays campaign to spread awareness of COVID19

Mask Mondays was a regional campaign that Madagascar always participated in as a way to spread awareness of COVID-19 and to encourage Mask-wearing, Physical Distance and Sanitizing hands.

7. Media Coordinator and Facebook/Newsletter contributions

The Rural Women's Assembly resourced a media coordinator who contributed to 7 monthly newsletters and keeping a dynamic country chapter facebook page. The facebook page can be seen here

<https://www.facebook.com/Rural-Womens-Assembly-Madagascar-110886513990205>

and the blog with story contributions can be found here:

<https://ruralwomensassembly.wordpress.com/>



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HRWA 2020 NARRATIVE REPORT

Background:

2020 has not been an easy year because of COVID-19 which resulted in several lockdowns. These lockdowns have impacted enormously on the lives of the poor people in Lesotho. Many of our members being small scale farmers suffered a lot as they lost all their products as they could not go to the local markets to sell

and their products ended up perishing. Lesotho is a landlocked country, so when South Africa closed the borders it meant many people struggled to access food, jobs and sell their goods.

The COVID situation also created high level of domestic and GBV. Many women reported abuse however, many were also unable to report these issues to the police. So it compounded the problems in the homes and the villages. It was especially difficult in very remote rural areas. Crime has also increased as youth struggle to find work.

As already mentioned the closing of the South African borders meant Lesotho was completely locked off from everything. We saw the prices of basic food stuff, health care escalating, in fact the prices of everything just sky-rocketed. Schools were closed, parents struggled to feed children that could not even be outside.

Churches also closed and so were the businesses. Many people lost jobs leading to stagnation in economic growth. Dropout of school kids in poorer areas, and poor health facilities.

High level of corruption in the department especially with C19 relief funds. Instead of government officials assisting us and providing food hampers and PPE for hospitals, the funds just disappeared and health care which is already in crisis has become worse. In some hospitals there was no oxygen. The country's ability to do COVID testing was also a challenge.

Internally in HRWA

As the lockdown intensified was used the moment to raise awareness on C19 among RWA members in a workshop supported by RWA regional office in March to May. This included training our members and communities to make their own sanitisers, tippy taps for handwashing in villages where there is no access to water.

We organised small meetings with our members and many HRWA members reported on the hunger in their communities and even in their homes. Whilst this was in part due to COVID, it was also because the

country for the first time in years had heavy rains. This meant that the lockdown often prevented women from going to work in their fields and planting was a problem. The rains also started early (March) which is before the normal rainy season. The closure of the local markets also lessens the income of the women who would sell their produce in the market. So, some basics like sugar, coffee, tea and rice were in short supply.

Households became dependent on food aid as many could not work. Many use to travel to South Africa but the impact of the lockdown meant closure of businesses and restructuring. Some key concerns that the RWA tried to deal with are the children who are dropping out of school due to the fact that parents lost their jobs and many of them especially girls have fallen pregnant. Many of our girls have turned into sex work as their last resort due to increasing unemployment rate but again the closure of businesses and some restructuring.

Campaigns:

Gender Based Violence:

The RWA has taken up the campaign on GBV. The movement managed to create publicity on the matter. We used the Community radio to take our messaging out to the women. We had monthly programmes on three



radio stations. This meant we were able to reach even the most remote mountain villages. We trained some of our women to speak on the radio and mobilise women to Say NO to GBV using the radio.

We hosted a National workshop training on GBV for RWA members and other stakeholders like Christian Council of Lesotho, Child and Gender Protection Unit (police force) and traditional media.

We also distributed information to youth women and encourage women to report GBV especially also in the schools, churches and every corner where there is abuse.

This outreach work has helped us to increase membership because we also started to focus much more activities at local and national level. Our membership became more involved and the knowledgeable. There was a greater understanding of our mandate and ownership our members were active in the movement. We managed to start small income generating projects for our members, with a revolving loan scheme.

Finally we engaged the parliamentary portfolio authority social



cluster on GBV, as present policies are not gender responsive, so we asked them to revisit them: GBV is not a family issue (to be kept there).

Climate change

We also focused on the issue of climate. After a long spell of drought that were more rains and in the last quarter as the lock



downs eased it lead to increased food production.

We worked with farmers to make household food production a priority. This is starting to impact on our members as we also focused on our seed campaign and members could share seeds.

Seed Research:

The seed research was one of the main activities in the period July to December. Lesotho hosted a national workshop on seeds. The exciting part was also the seed interviews with government and stakeholders about seed policy. Seeds were verified and we stimulated high levels of involvement amongst the farmers.

Participation in all RWA activities:

As RWA Lesotho, the members joined in all the RWA regional actions. Lesotho was very pleased to be part of the booklet on Waste. Several members joined the launch of the booklets because their waste stories were featured in the booklet.

We were also very involved in the media team and wrote stories on what was happening in Lesotho. Our members joined in the feminist school and also made presentations at the FISP and Agriculture meetings, especially those at the SADC / SAPNS People's Summit in Mozambique.

The participation the in the online meetings were challenging as many members have no access to technology and even money for data.

Another exciting moment was the October month of action. We organised local workshops, meetings and had a big event on International Rural Women's Day. The local members really

appreciated the increased local events.

We started to demand from Government a grant for unemployment, shelters for women and abused and elders with no family, Going forward in 2021:

Started income generating project to assist our members with revolving grants as many RWA members said they had no money to move their craft or projects forward. We have started with a revolving loan for districts members for rearing broiler chicken as an income generation project.

In addition, we also started Nutrition clubs at district levels where women are preserving their produce especially vegetables and vegetables for future use. Here we look at drying vegetables and also processing. These actions are really well received.

In the year ahead we will take up the issue of the vaccine and raise awareness so that we deal with the confusion towards the vaccine



as well as the scepticisms surrounding the vaccine.

The RWA is struggling to mobilise resources as our contract with OSISA ended in 2019. Now we are struggling financially to run its activities.

However, despite these problems the achievements are many in that we increased our outreach and membership. Ensuring that all the activities which normally used to be done at regional level now also happen at national level and local levels implies a much more active organisation at country level.

FUTURE PLANS:

- To strengthen our district leadership and membership.
- To develop a fundraising strategy for our local initiatives including our Secretariat.
- To recruit more young women and girls to our movement.
- To fight against all forms of violence.
- To campaign, advocate and lobby the government to stop promoting and commercialising agriculture but also the government to include traditional/ indigenous seeds in the national budget under the Farm Inputs Subsidy Program (FISP) but also to have national seed bank.

CONCLUSION

- The movement successfully conducted several activities despite the pandemic and the lockdown restrictions that were imposed on the country. However, RWA needs to invest in digital technology to keep the movement growing even during this time of C-19.

In 2020 we wish to thank all our partners for walking this challenging and difficult road with us during the COVID pandemic.

1) Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

7) Global Fund for Women

2) Africa Group of Sweden (AGS)

8) Both Ends

3) Driekoning's Aktion (DKA Austria)

9) Thousand Currents

4) Bread for the World (Germany)

10) Why Hunger

5) Fastenopher (Switzerland)

11) Open Society Initiative in Southern Africa (OSISA)

6) Mama Cash