



**Environmental  
Justice Fund**

BY ACTIVISTS • FOR ACTIVISTS

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022





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**We need an environmental and climate justice movement that is connected, resourced and coordinated.**



## Foreword from the Chairperson of the Board

It is a profound honor to write this foreword for the inaugural Environmental Justice Fund – South Africa (EJF) Annual Report. This year has been a testament to our collective dedication to environmental and climate justice, and I want to use this foreword to extend my gratitude to all the people who have made it possible.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the exceptional leadership of Lisa Chamberlain, whose unwavering commitment and principled activism have steered our course during a year of building and growth.

I must also commend our dedicated "ground staff," Vuyoletu Mntonintshi and Precious Mazibuko, who have traversed to the farthest villages and towns of South Africa to engage with environmental and climate justice organisations. They have shared vital knowledge, tools, and resources, expanding the agency of grassroots movements where it matters most. Your dedication is the backbone of our progress.

Our gratitude extends to Florence Nkholise, whose meticulous stewardship of EJF's purse ensures that the entrusted resources fulfill their purpose effectively.

At the EJF's launch event in August 2022, I declared, "We need an environmental and climate justice movement that is connected, resourced, and coordinated." As I reflect on the strides our comrades have made over the past year, I am confident that this vision is quickly becoming a reality.

I would like to express deep appreciation to our grants committee, the engine behind our operation. They meticulously dissect and deliberate over hundreds of applications, giving each one the particular attention it needs. This committee works with such an inspiring level of integrity and

it gives meaning to our slogan "by activists, for activists" and power to the participatory grant making model which we use.

Our Board of Directors has been instrumental in establishing the organisation and crafting progressive, robust governance policies. Striking a balance between procedural rigor and the practical needs of our staff, partners, and grantees. Our board meetings are fun [at times], but they have also been a space for building collective learning and the pursuit of the organisation's goals, and of justice.

To our invaluable donors, including Ford Foundation, Wallace Global Fund, Global Greengrants Fund, Open Society Foundation – South Africa, RAITH Foundation, European Climate Foundation, and the French Embassy, your trust and funding have reshaped South Africa's environmental and climate justice landscape and with time, we can do even more.

Lastly, I extend heartfelt gratitude to our comrades in civil society and communities. They have embraced and welcomed us as one of their own, recognising our shared mission: of building a collective force for environmental justice that cannot be ignored.

Thank you for including us in your training and capacity-building programs, for inviting us to speak at your events, for opening your communities to us, for attending our events and supporting our initiatives, and for engaging with us on the streets, on social media, and in boardrooms. Your solidarity gives us life.

**Matome Kapa**

Chairperson  
Environmental Justice Fund Board



# 1. Message from the Executive Director

**E**JF begins its work at a critical moment. We join a growing community of progressive philanthropy looking for ways to disrupt the traditional, and harmful, patterns of power that have permeated the funding world. What better way to do that, than for the environmental justice movement itself to develop its own funding mechanism. EJF is something of an experiment - bringing together the worlds of participatory grant-making, and environmental justice activism. EJF provides a mechanism to get resources to where they are needed most: the communities on the frontlines of environmental justice struggles.

We have much to learn and are grateful for the rich guidance we have and continue to receive from like-minded organisations, and from the communities we seek to serve. We hope that together we can build a stronger environmental justice movement and pull our planet back from the brink, and that in the process, we can demonstrate that decolonising philanthropy is not only possible, but powerful.

It is with great excitement that we introduce the latest in a series of firsts for the Environmental Justice Fund (EJF): our first ever Annual Report. This Report contextualises the need for an organisation like EJF, documents the process of getting EJF off the ground and describes our vision, mission and model. It also discusses the people, systems and funding that have been instrumental in making it all possible.

**Lisa Chamberlain**

Executive Director  
Environmental Justice Fund

Lastly, and most importantly, it examines the beginnings of EJF's support to the environmental justice movement. The Report covers the period up until the end of **February 2023**. Putting it together has provided a welcome opportunity to pause and reflect on EJF's journey thus far, and to celebrate how much has been achieved in such a short space of time.

Happy reading!



**We join a growing community of progressive philanthropy looking for ways to **disrupt the traditional, and harmful, patterns of power that have permeated the funding world.****





## 2. The need for a locally-rooted environmental justice fund

Climate change is no longer an uncertain future prediction and there is now a limited window in which we can still meaningfully address its impacts. Simultaneously, there is growing global recognition of environmental rights (in July 2022, the United Nations General Assembly recognised that everyone has a right to a healthy environment) and increasing momentum behind responding to the climate crisis, including heightened awareness of the need for climate responses to be rooted in social justice.

The impacts of climate change are not neutral. Grassroots communities, and women in particular, are hit first and worst. In South Africa, while our Constitution recognises the right to an environment not harmful to health or wellbeing, environmental injustice remains a key feature of ongoing systemic inequality. In the environmental context, inequality matters because inherent in such inequality is a skewed distribution of power which dictates access to land, natural resources and economic opportunities, determines what opportunities exist for participation

in decision-making, shapes who bears the brunt of environmental degradation, and influences how the benefits accruing from land and natural resources are distributed. Approaching climate change through the lens of social justice is thus a critical response to inequality (both global and local).

This foundational notion of climate justice is what has driven the inclusion of 'just' in the push for a just transition, as we grapple with how to move from an energy economy based on fossil fuels towards renewables. The task of ensuring a stable and sustainable energy supply, in ways which are inclusive and redistributive, is an enormously complex one. It requires our collective expertise. We need visionary policy-makers informed by credible scientists and resourced by progressive investors. In addition, participation from civil society - and grassroots communities in particular - is critical. Their participation is part of what it means to take a justice-orientated approach to climate change and the energy transition.

Grassroots communities must be part of the design and implementation of policies and programmes. They must also participate in visioning and implementing alternative developmental pathways. This is because as the ultimate intended beneficiaries of such policies and programmes, they are entitled to this. But it is also because they have a lot to offer. The communities most affected by environmental harm are extremely knowledgeable about how to combat it. Given the stakes involved with regards to their health, livelihoods and often lives, they are also extremely motivated to do so. While global agendas and political commitments are crucial, it is at the local level where words are turned into action. With South Africa poised to receive largescale climate finance, local communities can also be our eyes and ears on the ground to push for transparency and accountability in the use of this funding, and to identify possible corruption. As the climate clock ticks, there has never been a more important time for a well-organised and properly resourced environmental justice movement in South Africa.

Nevertheless, despite the critical role they play in the just transition and in advancing environmental justice more broadly, grassroots communities often struggle to access the support (both financial and otherwise) that they need to facilitate and sustain the important work that they do. The funders who typically support civil society tend to channel their funds to bigger, more established and professionalised NGOs.

The reasons for this include that international donors lack the nuanced local knowledge required to make informed funding decisions at this level, that the economies of scale involved in supporting small, informal organisations may not make sense for large donors, as well as regulatory constraints and political realities. Not only this, but the funding world is a place of elitism and power imbalances which play out across lines of race, gender, class and global geographies meaning that philanthropy often perpetuates patterns of colonial oppression. Its decolonisation is long overdue and it is critical that mechanisms exist to channel resources to where they are needed most: to grassroots communities bearing the brunt of climate change and leading the struggle to advance environmental justice.

**It is this confluence of challenges that EJJF seeks to address.**



The impacts of climate change are not neutral. Grassroots communities, and women in particular, are hit first and worst.





# 3. The journey of bringing EJF to life

EJF developed out of discussions taking place in the environmental justice sector in South Africa over many years. It is the result of much thinking, planning and collaboration driven by a common desire to strengthen the environmental justice movement. In 2016, at a gathering hosted by Earthlife Africa, community participants voiced the common refrain that there is need for funders to support community organisations and activism directly, rather than channelling their resources exclusively to NGOs. Responding to this call, the RAITH Foundation hosted a meeting in late 2016 which brought together Earthlife Africa, groundWork, the Centre for Environmental Rights (CER), the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) to discuss this possibility. The idea of a fund which would provide support directly to CBOs and other community structures advancing environmental justice in South Africa emerged from these discussions. The Bench Marks Foundation and

Womin subsequently came on board and together, this collective of organisations operated as an Advisory Committee to guide the establishment of the new fund. From the outset, it was important that the process was a collective and participatory one.



To advance the initiative, a RAITH Foundation grant to groundWork included support to establish such a mechanism. To this end, groundWork appointed a consultant to guide the process. In mid-2020, a range of consultations were conducted with members of the Advisory Committee, NGOs, public interest law clinics, potential funding partners and other small grants mechanisms both locally and internationally. An analysis of the existing support being provided by NGOs to CBOs doing environmental justice work in South Africa was compiled, and lessons identified which could be learned from the operation of other small grants mechanisms. This process resulted in a Scoping Report which was disseminated at the beginning of September 2020.

The members of the Advisory Committee then met in a two-day workshop in September 2020 to discuss the strategic direction of EJF. A draft Theory of Change and Strategic Plan were produced out of those discussions. In November 2020, in furtherance of the inclusionary and participatory approach to the development of EJF which was adopted, an open workshop was held to canvass the views of a broader range of people. Community organisations and networks, additional NGOs and funders were invited to this full-day workshop. The draft Theory of Change and Strategic Plan was openly circulated ahead of this workshop. The Theory of Change and Strategic Plan were then amended to incorporate the feedback from both the Advisory Committee workshop and the open workshop. From this revised Strategic Plan, a draft Board Charter, Terms of Reference for the Grants Committee and job descriptions for initial staff members were developed.

Strong support in these formative years also came from the Global Greengrants Fund (GGF) which has been providing support directly to grassroots communities doing environmental justice work across the world, including in South Africa – through its Southern African Advisory Board – for many decades. Part of GGF’s model is to support the establishment of new independent funds and there are now a number of independent funds operating in collaboration and solidarity with GGF. EJF is the latest fund in this family, operating independently but as a sister fund to GGF’s Southern African Advisory Board which has been an important source of guidance and will now be able to focus more on other countries in the region as EJF gets up and running.

The next step was to establish a board for EJF. In order to strengthen its community representation, the Advisory Committee expanded to include Women on Farms and the Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa (MEJCON). This expanded Advisory Committee was tasked with recruiting board members. As part of EJF’s continued ethos of transparency and inclusion, the decision was taken to issue an open call for applications to the Board, rather than to use the more traditional ‘appointment through networks’ approach. The open call was issued in July 2021. Shortlisted applicants were interviewed and a 7-person board was appointed in September 2021. EJF was formally registered as a Non-Profit Company in August 2021. In the year that followed, the focus was on setting up governance systems, refining a strategic plan, recruiting a staff team, establishing a communications strategy and branding, building

relationships, raising funds, developing policies and procedures, and equipping the organisation to start its work. This is discussed further later in this Report.

By August 2022, EJF was ready to launch! An official launch event took place at Chiesa di Pazzo Lupi in Melville, Johannesburg on 24 August 2022, and was also streamed online to facilitate the participation of our partners based in other parts of the country, and across the world. The launch was a collective celebration which brought together the organisations, individuals and funding partners who had been part of bringing EJF to life. As part of the event, we also launched our new [website](#), screened a short video showcasing contributions from various of EJF’s partners discussing their views of environmental justice and how an organisation like EJF could contribute, and released our first open call for proposals (more on this below). You can read more about the launch and watch the video [here](#).





# 4. Vision, mission and objectives

EJF's *vision* is that **environmental justice prevails in South Africa where all people enjoy an environment which is not harmful to their health and wellbeing, and the environment is protected for the benefit of present and future generations.** One of the things needed to achieve this is effective, resilient, community-based organisations (CBOs), operating in strong and expanding networks. EJF's mission is therefore to **strengthen the environmental justice movement in South Africa** by providing financial, capacity-strengthening and networking support to and networks working to advance environmental justice.

To give our work focus in the shorter-term, we have identified the following five objectives which we hope to achieve by 31 December 2023:



**1** To enhance the ability of at least eighteen CBOs in South Africa to implement their own responses to environmental injustice.

To expand the number of CBOs operating in the environmental justice sector in South Africa by at least three. **2**

**3** To strengthen solidarity and collaboration between existing players in the environmental justice sector in South Africa.

To build an organisation equipped to achieve EJF's objectives. **4**

**5** To establish EJF's reputation as an ally in environmental justice struggles in South Africa.

EJF has made good progress towards achieving these objectives. We have spent the last year building the organisation so that it is well-placed and ready to provide support to CBOs in the environmental justice movement in South Africa. We now have people, funding, policies and systems in place that enable us to identify and support our grantees in a strategic and sustainable manner. We have also commenced our grant-making and by February 2023 had started supporting 12 CBOs and community networks.

# 5. The EJF model

EJF is working to strengthen the environmental justice movement by providing financial, capacity-strengthening and networking support to CBOs and community networks. In the process we are developing an innovative grant-making model based on participatory grant-making principles, which seeks to disrupt and redefine the patterns of power inherent in philanthropy, and centre community agency, trust, accessibility, flexibility and wellbeing.

## 5.1. Our theory of movement-building

If our mission is to strengthen the environmental justice movement, then to guide our work we need at least a working theory of what it takes to strengthen a movement. Movement-building is complex, dynamic and context-specific. EJF's understanding of what it takes to strengthen a movement is evolving but at this stage encompasses at least the following:



CBOs are already doing important work and a big part of our contribution is simply to **enhance their ability to do what they are already doing**, by giving them funds to support their work.



Activism is physically exhausting, emotionally draining and often dangerous. A strong movement is one which refuses to perpetuate internally the violence it is fighting externally, and understands the need for resilience in the long-term. We therefore need to **centre wellbeing** and practices of self- and collective care.



Injecting funds is not enough to strengthen a movement. Organisations also need to be supported to manage funds, and to grow and strengthen their organisations in other ways. For this reason, EJF uses an **accompaniment model** where the support we provide includes a diverse range of capacity-strengthening support tailored to the unique needs of each grantee. Accompaniment work can focus on skills like budgeting and financial management, fundraising, leadership development, legal registration, deepening content knowledge such as on climate change and the Just Transition, or take the form of security and/or psycho-social support in situations where activists are facing threats and dealing with trauma. Because there is a wealth of experience and expertise within the movement itself and it makes sense to tap into this, accompaniment is provided either inhouse by EJF itself, by a partner NGO or CBO, or occasionally by a specifically sourced consultant.



Collective and inclusive mobilisation is critical for CBOs given the repositories of power that they are confronting. So we seek opportunities to **strengthen networks** between and for CBOs in order to encourage and enable collaborative action.



We believe that **a strong movement is an expanding movement.** We seek to grow the existing environmental justice movement by actively supporting small, new and isolated organisations so that it is possible for new organisations to 'break in' to the sector. In this way, we can help to grow the groundswell of mobilisation around environmental justice and avoid the pattern of tired conversations between the same groups of people and organisations.





## 5.2. Participatory grant-making

### Why use a participatory grant-making model?

Many intermediary funds are set up as donor-driven collaborations. EJJ is different. We have developed organically out of the environmental justice movement itself. From the very beginning, EJJ was conceptualised as a fund 'by activists for activists'. We believe that supporting those most affected by environmental injustice to design and implement their own responses, is our best chance of reversing the tide of environmental destruction and building a better, sustainable and more just world. By practicing what we preach, and placing power in the hands of environmental justice activists in EJJ's own operations, we can demonstrate the authenticity of that belief.

But working in this way also provides us with an opportunity to demonstrate that shifting power to grassroots communities works. The activists we work with are experts. They have vast knowledge of their land, the natural resources they act as custodians over, and the ways in which climate change and other forms of environmental degradation are impacting their communities.

They also have experience with the complexities of different methodologies of democratic accountability, and have an acute understanding of the challenges facing CBOs in South Africa. They can also provide

nuanced analysis of the political, economic and social context at local level. The question is therefore not why should these activists guide our work, but why aren't more funders listening to this repository of expertise?

In fact, more and more are. Participatory grant-making is a growing trend in global philanthropy as funders increasingly confront the harmful power imbalances in the world of philanthropy and focus grant-making on grassroots communities by facilitating community-lead solutions in ways which recognise the agency and enhance the dignity of people on the ground. Given the intersections of environmental injustice with racial, gender and class-based inequality, resourcing the environmental justice movement by channelling funds to those on the frontlines is a necessary contribution to the decolonisation of philanthropy. Shifting power into the hands of the kinds of communities that EJJ seeks to serve, not just in terms of where the money goes but also in terms of HOW we operate, is a key way that we can contribute to this.

## 5.3. Size and length of grants

Our grants range from 3-month grants of R25 000 (approx. US\$1 350) to 1-year grants of R100 000 (approx. US\$5400). The determination of which size grant is appropriate is made on a case-by-case basis guided by factors like the nature of the project / campaign for which the funds are sought and the organisation's capacity to handle funding.



We also believe that a **strong movement is diverse and inclusive**. For this reason, we strive for various forms of diversity in the organisations that we support. This includes issue diversity and geographic diversity. We are trying to support communities confronting a range of different environmental justice issues – such as mining, energy, water, waste, food, oceans – as these struggles are intersectional and there is rich learning to be shared between activists working in these different areas. We also strive for geographic diversity and consciously look for grantees based across South Africa outside of urban centres like Johannesburg and Cape Town which is where available resources are traditionally concentrated.



Bureaucracy and red tape are not helpful in a movement-building context. For this reason, EJJ constantly seeks opportunities to improve our **accessibility**, for example by ensuring that our website, publications and application process are available in languages other than English, that our grant application process is straightforward, and that reporting obligations are not onerous. It is also why we operate a rapid-response funding mechanism alongside our regular grant-making cycles.



## Elements of EJF's participatory approach

So what does participatory grant-making (PGM) look like in practice? There are 6 core elements to EJF's PGM approach.

1

### Community activists decide who gets support from EJF:

Perhaps the most important element of our PGM approach is that decisions on which organisations should get support are not made by EJF's Board, but by a dedicated structure – called our Grants Committee (GC) – which is comprised primarily of community activists (discussed further later in this Report).

2

### Community activists provide input into EJF's decision-making criteria and processes:

As part of EJF's accountability and transparency mechanisms, the GC must make decisions within the framework set out in our Granting Framework (which is freely available on our website in multiple languages). While the Granting Framework is a Board-approved document, the decision-making criteria it contains were workshopped with members of the GC in the development phase.

3

### EJF consciously recruits activists onto our board and staff:

As a fund 'by activists, for activists' it is important that all our structures include representatives from the environmental justice movement. This applies not only to our Grants Committee, but also to our Board and staff team. This is another important way in which we are ensuring that we remain rooted in, and led by, the movement itself.

4

### Grantees co-create accompaniment plans with EJF:

At the beginning of each grant, we sit down with each grantee to discuss what forms of accompaniment they would find helpful. This results in the development of an accompaniment plan which is a combination of the grantee's self-identified needs and our own assessment of areas where capacity-strengthening might be useful.

5

### CBOs provide accompaniment to other CBOs:

Often the best people to provide organisational strengthening support and mentoring to smaller/newer CBOs are activists who have walked that journey before. Where possible, EJF tries to partner with more experienced CBOs to provide this kind of support to its grantees.

6

### Grantees evaluate EJF's work:

We consciously create opportunities for feedback from our grantees. We must have the courage to admit when things don't work and to try something new, and we commit to take the feedback that we receive seriously. This is both because we believe that doing so will enhance the effectiveness of our work, but also as a deliberate move away from the disregard of community voices which is so prevalent in engagements on environmental issues with both the state and the private sector in South Africa.





# 6. Our team

## 6.1. The Board

EJF's board consists of: Matome Kapa (Chairperson); Phindile Khulu; Bobby Peek; Eric Mokuoa; Gugulethu Makhubo; Anne Emmett; and Lisa Chamberlain (Executive Director). Between them, the board members have expertise in governance, NGO leadership, fundraising, finance and donor reporting,

community organising, support to activists, monitoring and evaluation, law, and strategic communication for NGOs. Several of the board members have also worked in the environmental justice sector for some time. As a collective, the EJF board is therefore well-placed to strategically guide EJF in its critical formative years.



### Matome Kapa (Chairperson)

Matome Kapa is an experienced human rights attorney and activist with a particular interest in environmental justice.

During his legal studies at the University of Witwatersrand, his interest in the natural sciences, combined with a passion for social justice, led him to focus on environmental law. Matome was admitted as an attorney of the High Court in 2015. At university he participated in the Street Law programme which focused on teaching legal remedies to vulnerable communities. He also completed a stint as a public defender for Legal Aid South Africa. Today, Matome leads the Activist Support & Training programme at the Centre for Environmental Rights (CER) as programme head. He is also a steering committee member for the South African Human Rights Defenders Protection Fund.

### Phindile Khulu

Phindile Khulu has contributed her finance expertise to the social justice sector in South Africa for seven years.

She is passionate about community wellbeing. As a result, she is a mentor to many students. She also provides support to the South African Journal on Human Rights. She holds a Bachelor of Business and Commerce Accounting (Monash University), a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialised Accountancy (Wits), a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration and a Master of Business Leadership (both from UNISA Graduate School of Business Leadership). Phindi is a project accountant at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) at Wits Law School. She also sits on the board of Lawyers Against Abuse.







## Bobby Peek

Bobby Peek is Director of the groundWork Trust: Friends of the Earth, South Africa.

He grew up on the fenceline of south Durban's Engen oil refinery, co-founded the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, was national campaigns coordinator for the Environmental Justice Networking Forum, and in 1998 received the Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa. He was on South Africa's first National Environmental Advisory Committee to the South African Minister of Environment. From 2008 to 2012 he was on the international executive committee of Friends of the Earth International, the world's largest federation of grassroots organisations fighting for environmental and social justice. He serves on the International Board for the Global Greengrants Fund. He advises on various national and international environmental justice strategies. He has received an honorary PhD from the Durban University of Technology. In December 2020 he was appointed by South Africa's President to serve on the Presidential Climate Commission.



## Gugulethu Makhubo

Gugulethu Makhubo is a pan African strategic marketing, communications and stakeholder engagement specialist.

Her industry experience extends over 17 years and she has worked in African Markets for over eight years. In the past, she has worked for and collaborated with SOS Children's Villages (Eastern and Southern Africa region), The Palladium Group, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Institute for Economic Justice, City of Tshwane (South Africa's administrative capital) and the Department of Social Development. Her academic background is in marketing communications and business management.

## Anne Emmett\*

Anne Emmett is an independent, development funding and monitoring and evaluation consultant.

She has over a number of years worked with Independent, Corporate, Family and Community Foundations, State-related funding entities and Non-Profit Organisations working in the Human Rights, Environmental and Social Development sectors in southern Africa. The thrust of her work has been to facilitate and leverage resources and partnerships to explore meaningful ways to tackle complex problems. In this role, her work includes research, strategic planning, developing and implementing funding policies and processes, monitoring and evaluation of both donor strategies and funded projects, organisational capacity assessments and governance reviews.

Prior to her role as an independent consultant, Anne worked in executive leadership roles in both Non-Profit and State-related development funding entities. Anne has a MPhil Degree in Monitoring and Evaluation, cum laude (Stellenbosch), a History Honours Degree (UCT), a BA Degree (UCT) and is a Chartered Director (SA) (Institute of Directors in South Africa). At present, Anne also serves on the Boards of Tekano - Atlantic Fellows For Health Equity in South Africa and the Synergos Institute Southern Africa. She is a Senior Fellow of the Synergos Institute, a member of the Institute of Directors in South Africa and a member of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association.



\*Anne Emmett has subsequently stepped down from the Board due to capacity constraints.

## Eric Mokuoa

Eric Mokuoa is a human rights and social activist who has been part of campaigns against injustice faced by communities at the hands of big corporations.

Over the years, he has travelled extensively gaining huge insights and experience in working with many community-based organisations in Limpopo, North West, Mpumalanga, and the Free State. He has worked with both local and international networks and organisations. On the continent, Eric has served on the steering committee of the International Alliance on Natural Resources in Africa (IANRA). He has spent much of his time as a community researcher, campaigner and activist, providing support to grassroots organisations. He currently works for Bench Marks Foundation as a program officer. Eric holds four academic qualifications from the University of Johannesburg: BA in Politics; BA Honours in Politics and International Relations; PostGrad Diploma in Social Research; and a Masters in Business Administration (MBA).





As part of EJF's commitment to putting real power in the hands of community-based activists, EJF uses a participatory model of grant-making in which decisions on who gets support are made by activists from the environmental justice sector.

## 6.2. The Grants Committee

As discussed above, as part of EJF's commitment to putting real power in the hands of community-based activists, EJF uses a participatory model of grant-making in which decisions on who gets support are made by activists from the environmental justice sector. EJF's Grants Committee (GC) was appointed through an open recruitment process which took place in June – July 2022. An open advertisement was issued and a subcommittee of the EJF Board served as the recruitment panel.

**The considerations which were taken into account when constituting the GC included:**

- The need to ensure that all members of the GC are activists with experience working on environmental justice issues and with communities;
- The value of a GC with experience in a range of different thematic areas of environmental justice (e.g. mining, water, food sovereignty etc);
- A commitment to ensuring that the majority of GC members are community-based;
- The value of a GC comprised of people from across South Africa and not concentrated in a particular province; and
- A commitment to prioritising the voices of women and youth;
- The need for EJF's Executive Director to sit on the GC as the connection between the staff, GC and Board.



Appointed in July 2022, the inaugural GC comprises Bulelwa Klaasen (Chairperson), Taryn Pereira (Deputy Chairperson), Lizeka Ntsikeni, Elton Thobejane, Samson Mokoena and Lisa Chamberlain (ex officio).<sup>1</sup> As a collective, the GC has experience in mining, marine and coastal resources, mobilisation of fisher communities, food sovereignty, water, air pollution, eco-feminism, climate justice, nuclear power, biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems.

<sup>1</sup> Nolundi Luwaya was also a member of the inaugural GC but had to step down shortly afterwards due to capacity constraints.



## Bulelwa Klaasen (Chairperson)

Bulelwa Klaasen is a youth activist who has worked on climate change and just transition with a particular focus on anti-nuclear work in Gqeberha, South Africa.

She is a founder of the Siyanqoba Feeding Scheme which has supported many hungry and child-headed families. Bulelwa serves on the Eastern Cape Environmental Forum and is part of a group of activists from Earthlife Africa providing advice to the Presidential Climate Commission. She serves on the Water Crisis Committee that is spearheading accountability from the government on the water issues in Nelson Mandela Bay and is a member of a movement called #the!sh!sReal that deals with the sewerage that runs through townships. Bulelwa is passionate about bringing a change to her community and continuously works to ensure that the state respects its people by addressing their basic and environmental needs.



## Lizeka Ntsikeni

Lizeka Ntsikeni is a youth environmental activist from Bizana in the Eastern Cape which falls under Amadiba Administrative Area, Eastern Pondoland.

She is the founder of a growing NPO called Imbo of Mpondoland, which focuses on women's rights, protecting biodiversity, climate change, agroecology, and the protection of medicinal and indigenous plants. Lizeka has worked as a research assistant with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and is a graduate of the Rights and Remedies Course run by the Centre for Environmental Rights. Lizeka loves her community and its environment and believes that we need to treat the environment well so that it can also treat us well.



## Taryn Pereira (Deputy Chairperson)

Taryn Pereira is an activist researcher, based at the Environmental Learning Research Centre, at the university currently known as Rhodes.

She coordinates the Coastal Justice Network, a knowledge action network of small-scale fishers and other community-based ocean defenders, researchers, and civil society organisations, working collectively to bring about environmental justice in the coastal context.





## Samson Mokoena

Samson Mokoena became an environmental justice activist in 1999 when he was a founding member of the Steel Valley Crisis Committee.

He was born in the Free State Province and grew up in Evaton Township in the Vaal Triangle. He matriculated at E.D Mashabane Secondary School. He was later a founding member of the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA) in 2004 and continues to serve as Coordinator of VEJA.



## Elton Thobejane

Elton Thobejane has been a mining and environmental activist since 2009 and is a paralegal for the local community advice office in Tubatse in Limpopo province.

He is the current chairperson of Sekhukhune Combined Mining Affected Communities in his community and serves on the Steering Committees of the Climate Justice Coalition and the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Fund. Elton is the former National Chairperson of the Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa. He possesses an abundance of knowledge and skills in community capacitation, mobilisation and organising.

Members of the GC serve a two-year term, with the possibility of extension. EJF is committed to good governance and the Grants Committee operates in the context of authority delegated to it by the EJF Board. They are governed by a Terms of Reference and make decisions within the framework of a Granting Framework approved by the Board which is available on our website in multiple languages.

## 6.3. The Staff



## Lisa Chamberlain (Executive Director)

Lisa Chamberlain is an activist, attorney and academic with more than 12 years of experience working in the social justice sector in South Africa.

Prior to joining the Environmental Justice Fund, she was Deputy and Acting Director of the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, a public interest law clinic at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She is a Visiting Senior Lecturer in the Wits Law School and a Research Associate at the Southern Centre for Inequality Studies. She has worked in private practice as an attorney and clerked at the Constitutional Court of South Africa. She has a BA LLB (Wits) and an LLM (University of Michigan). Lisa is passionate about environmental justice, and how it intersects with gender equality. She has particular experience working with communities affected by mining in South Africa. Lisa is interested in supporting activism which enhances well-being and is currently busy with her PhD in which she is investigating the litigation and advocacy strategies used by the climate justice movement in South Africa.

As EJF's Executive Director, Lisa is responsible for driving the strategic direction of the organisation. She understands her role as being that of custodian of the spirit of EJF. She builds partnerships with like-minded funds and propels EJF's advocacy work with philanthropy. She also leads the staff team, makes sure that EJF is financially sustainable and oversees operational management at EJF. She also serves as a member of the Grants Committee.





## Florence Nkholise

Florence Morongoenyane Nkholise has over 21 years of experience in the NGO environment providing technical support in financial management, financial accounting, grant management, human resources development, administrative policies and procedures, and risk management.

She has worked both with international NGOs such as CARE, Child Fund International, and FHI360 and with South African organisations like the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Association for Water and Rural Development. She has extensive experience working with the requirements of specific donor agencies such as the Global Fund, World Bank, USAID, DFID, UN, and EU. She has worked in countries in Southern, East, and West Africa. Florence holds a B Com degree from the National University of Lesotho, and she is passionate about sound financial management and enjoys using her skills to assist organisations to advance social justice. Florence is currently pursuing a short course in Supply Chain Management through GetSmarter University of Cape Town online short courses.

Florence is EJJ's Finance Associate. Think of her as our Minister of Finance! She develops budgets, makes sure that EJJ is tax compliant and that we spend our money responsibly and in accordance with what we have agreed with our donors. She prepares financial reports to donors, makes sure that grants get paid to EJJ's grantees on time, manages payroll and shepherds EJJ through our annual audit. Basically, if it has to do with money, Florence is on it.

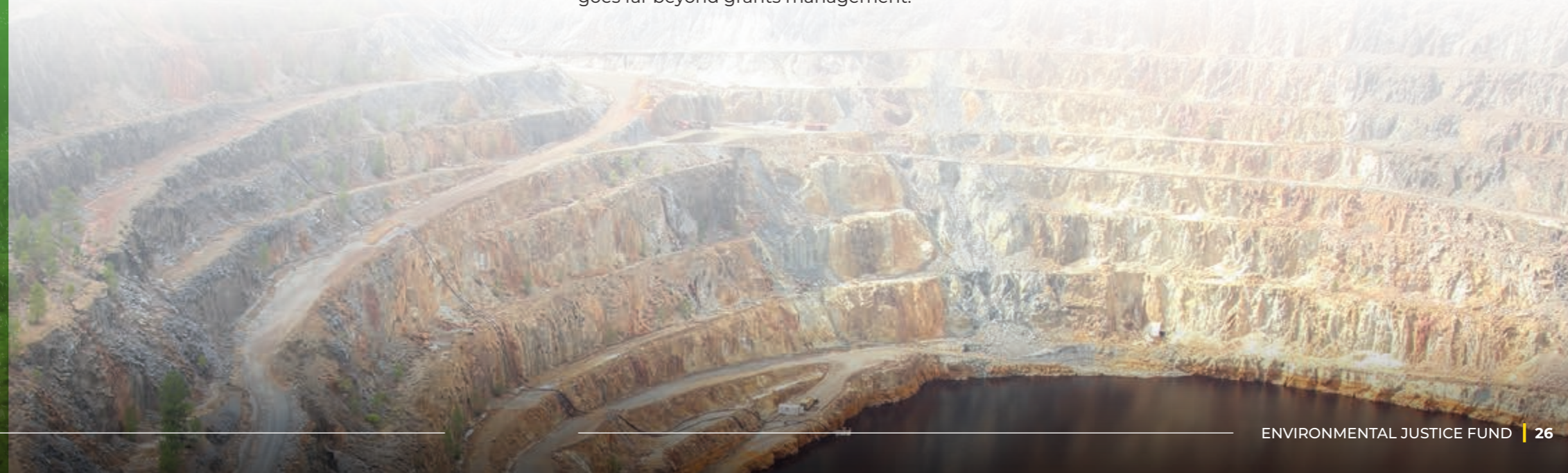


## Vuyolethu Mntonintshi

Vuyolethu Mntonintshi is a seasoned activist and is committed to promoting social justice and dedicating his efforts to fulfilling the promise of quality life for all.

He was based at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits University for 6 years, where he undertook research, advocacy and litigation in the Gender Justice; and Home, Land, and Rural Democracy Programmes. In this role, he has advanced fundamental human rights for marginalised communities and worked on projects about child abuse, evictions, rural democracy, assisted survivors of GBV with access to shelters, and has supported other social justice and community-based organisations. Vuyolethu holds an LLB degree from Walter Sisulu University and is currently pursuing an LLM in Environmental Law at the University of the Western Cape.

Vuyo is EJJ's Activist Support Coordinator. This is our version of a Programme Officer and at EJJ the role goes far beyond grants management. Vuyo is the guy that communities interact with first and most often at EJJ. He leads the screening of all new proposals and provides support to our grantees in so many ways, seen and unseen. He works with grantees to identify their accompaniment needs, and develops and implements accompaniment plans, sometimes providing support himself, sometimes making sure that the needed support is provided by one of EJJ's partners. He coordinates grantee convenings and can generally be found travelling across the country visiting our grantees to check-in and provide support. He is also part of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation Leading for Healing for the Social Justice Sector, Emerging Leaders Programme. Vuyo is EJJ's Activist Support Coordinator. This is our version of a Programme Officer and at EJJ the role goes far beyond grants management.







## Precious Mazibuko

Philisiwe Precious Mazibuko is a human rights activist from the South of Durban who is interested and affected by air pollution and all environmental injustices.

Precious is a believer in youth participation and works with youth activists ensuring continuity in environmental justice work locally and nationally. Precious is the co-founder of Waste for Change NPC and a popular education facilitator at the Durban South Community Peace Builders where she is working towards building a united and cohesive civil space inclusive of people particularly in middle to low income communities. She is currently an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity based at Tekano and a Community Scholar at the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She is also preparing to get her truck-drivers license!

Precious is EJJ's Communications Facilitator. The title says it all – if it needs to be communicated, Precious is involved. Her role encompasses not only sharing EJJ's work but also amplifying the work of our grantees. She runs our socials, kickstarted the compilation of our accompaniment providers database and is also leading a project in which EJJ has been mapping the environmental justice movement in selected provinces. Precious also makes sure that we come up for air and have a little fun once in a while!

The learning curve for a new organisation like ours is very steep. EJJ is keen to entrench a culture of reflection early on. To this end we held our first staff retreat in December 2022. Amongst other things we spent time workshoping the values that we would like EJJ to embody like transparency, inclusivity, flexibility, power-consciousness, wellbeing-centred, feminist, tech-innovative and pioneering. We also held a strategic planning retreat in February 2023 involving the staff, board and Grants Committee to reflect as a collective on what we have learned and how this informs our approach going forward. One of the key actions to come out of this was the need to document the innovative model we are implementing.



## 7. Our governance framework

EJJ is registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) in South Africa in terms of the Companies Act 71 of 2008 (registration number 2021/845272/08), and is also a registered Non-Profit Organisation in terms of the Non-Profit Organisation Act 71 of 1997 (registration number 271-060 NPO). We also have Public Benefit Organisation status with the South African tax authority in terms of section 10(1)(cN) of the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962 (PBO registration number 930073942).

Sitting on the board of a new organisation requires a significant commitment as there is much work to be done. Unlike many organisations that struggle to get board members to an annual meeting, EJJ is blessed to have a very engaged board which met 10 times between its appointment in September 2021, and February 2023. The board has made considerable

strides in constructing a thoughtful and robust governance framework that will provide the foundation off which EJJ can do its work long into the future.

To give a sense of this, during this period alone, the Board considered and adopted/noted the following governance documents and policies: Three year Strategic Plan, 2023 Objectives, Board Charter, Terms of Reference for Grants Committee, Granting Framework, Emergency Granting Framework, Delegation of Authority, Risk matrix, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework, Leave and Working Hours Policy, Staff Well-being and Career Development Policy, Transformation Policy, Travel Policy, Information and Communication Technology Policy, Privacy Policy and Staffing Plan.



# 8. Our work

## 8.1. Selecting EJF's first cohort of grantees

On 24 August 2022 we released our first open call for proposals in English, isiZulu and Sesotho. In its early stages, EJF is using the methodology of open calls. This is an intentional strategy for two primary reasons. Firstly, we are using the first few years as a diagnostic exercise in which we must listen carefully to what the environmental justice movement is telling us about what its priorities are, and what funds are needed for. Rather than coming with our own pre-conceived ideas of thematic priorities, the open calls are providing us access to incredibly valuable data which be used to guide our strategy. The second reason why open calls are important at this stage is for credibility purposes. For EJF to be received as a credible and trusted ally, we have to ensure that we are not drawn into any movement politics and that we are experienced as accessible regardless of a CBOs pre-existing networks or affiliations. Open calls are an important way to do that.

In order to make the process as accessible and transparent as possible, application materials including the Granting Framework (explaining the criteria used to make decisions and who makes those decisions) and an infographic (explaining the application process) were available in multiple languages. These were shared on our website and all our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), as well as circulated through our networks. We also held two open workshops to explain the application process and provide support for prospective applicants.

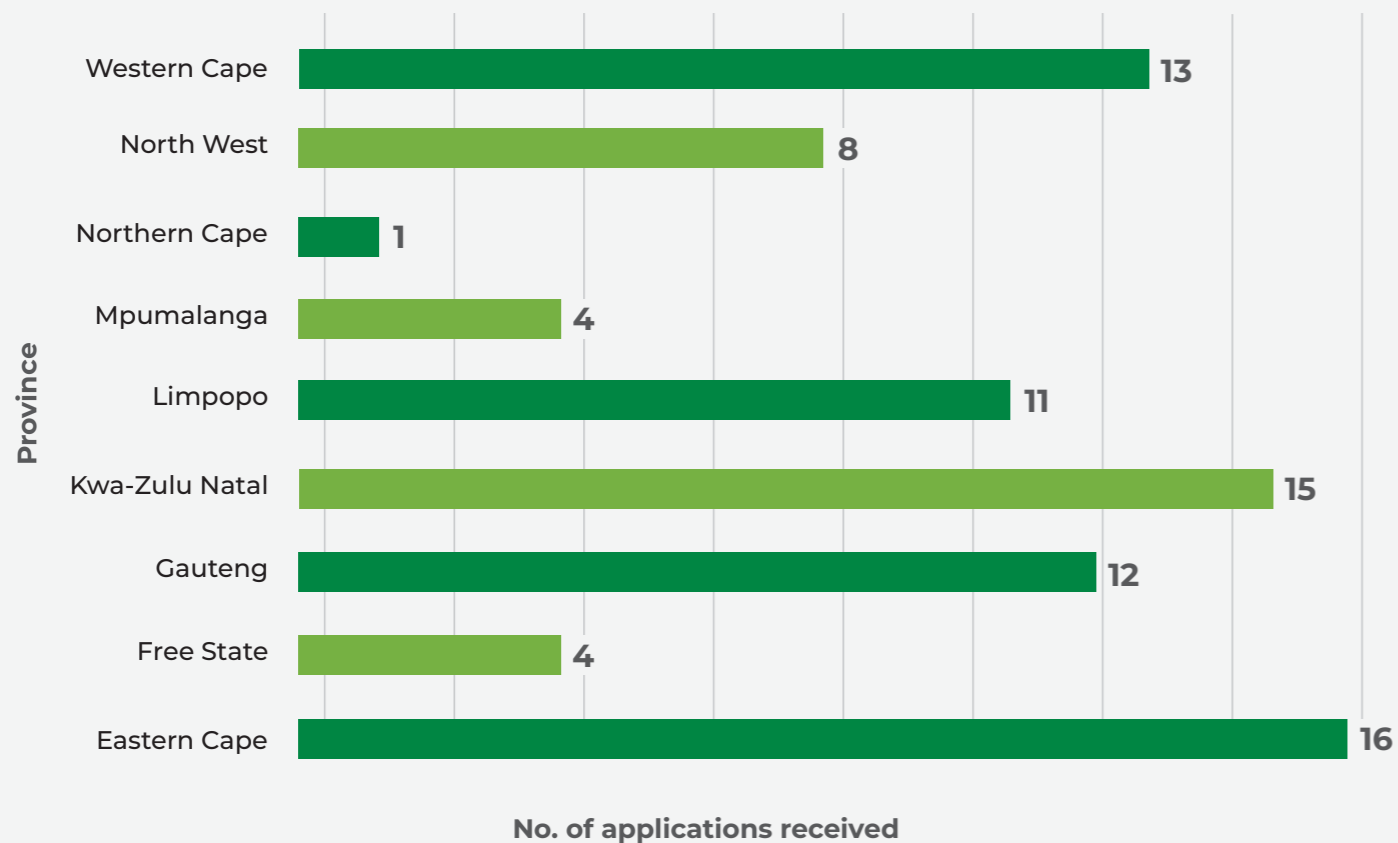




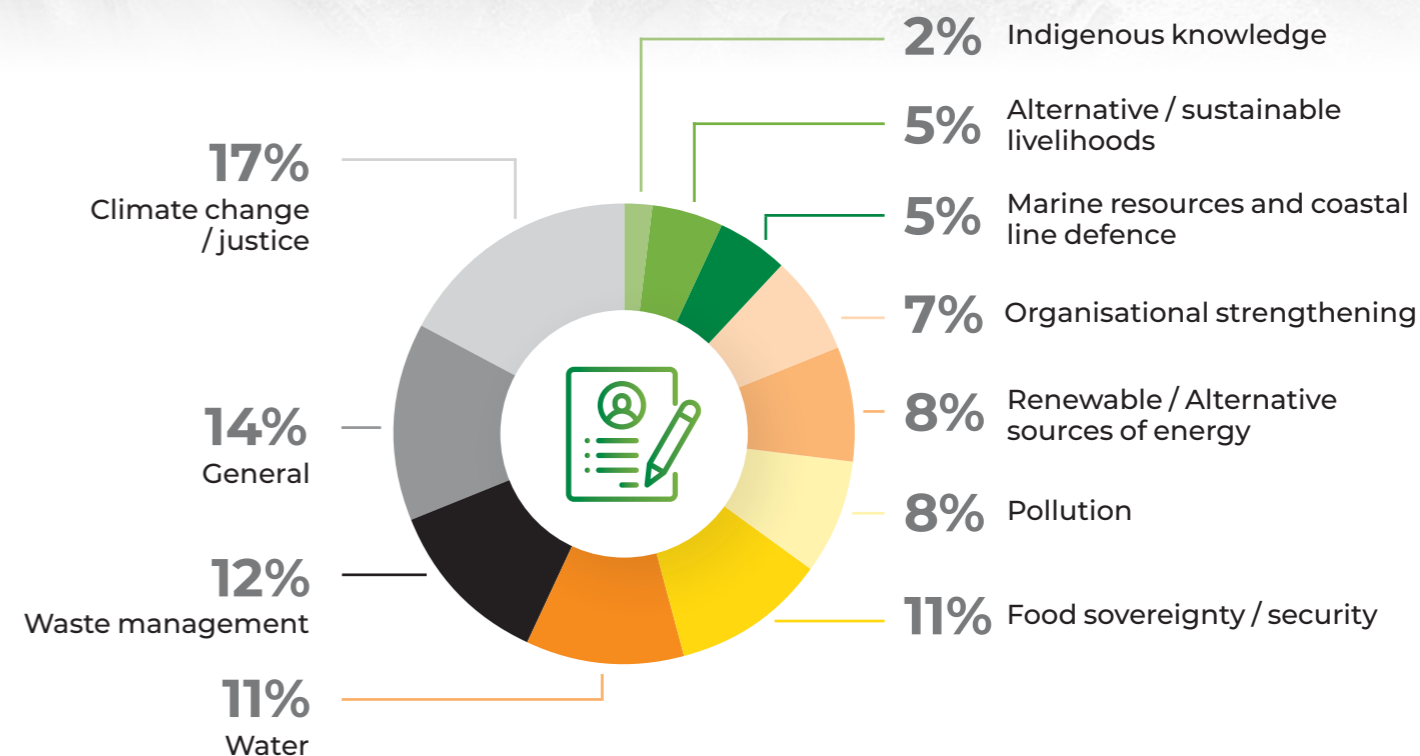
We received 84 proposals, all of which were screened by our staff team in September 2022. The screening process includes an assessment against EJF's eligibility criteria - which are that applicants must be a) an organisation or network based in, and part of, the community it serves; b) working on environmental justice; c) in South Africa. The screening team also

speaks to the references listed on each application and examines the applicant organisation's online presence (website, social media engagement), if any. A Screening Outcomes Report is then prepared which is passed on to the Grants Committee together with copies of all the proposals received. Some of the data from this round of proposals is captured in the graphs below.

**No. of Applications Received per Province**



**No. of Applications Received per Focus Area**



**The Grants Committee met to deliberate on the proposals in October 2022.**

The full decision-making criteria are set out in our Granting Framework but in essence, organisations are selected to ensure that as a collective, the cohort of grantees selected reflect geographic diversity (i.e. are based all over the country and particularly in rural areas which are traditionally under-resourced), thematic diversity (so there is not an over-concentration of organisations working on one specific environmental justice issue e.g. mining) and a mix of more established/experienced organisations and smaller/newer organisations. Preference is given to organisations led by women and/or young people, or whose activities are designed to benefit those groups, and to organisations that can demonstrate a degree of democratic accountability in their work. In this first round, we had budget and capacity to start supporting 12 organisations.

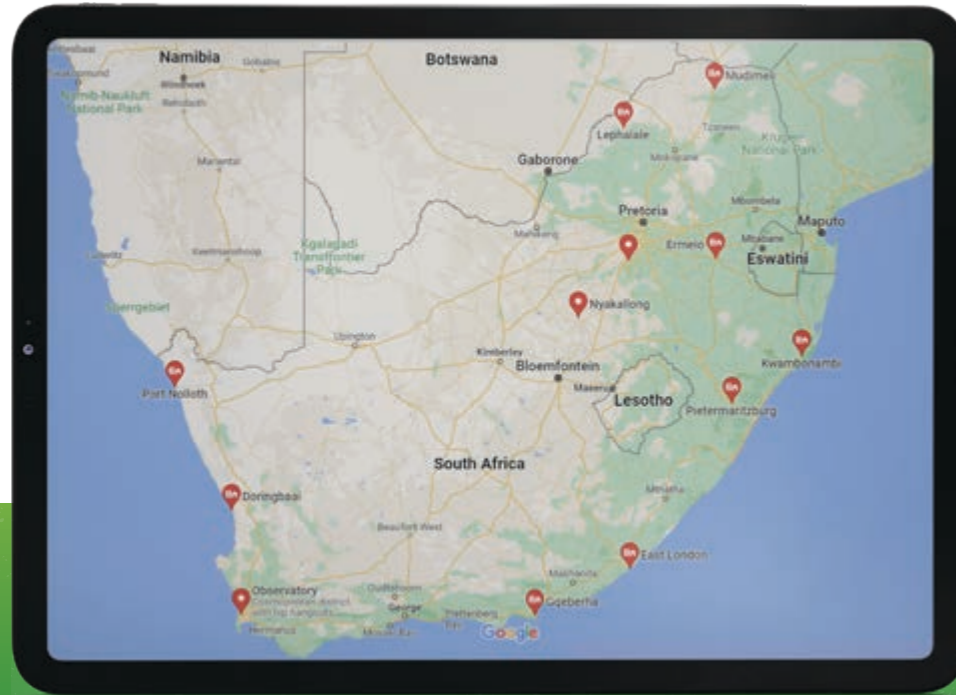




## 8.2. The first cohort

EJF's first cohort of grantees are tackling a diverse range of some of the most acute environmental justice challenges in South Africa today, including environmentally harmful and exclusionary mining practices, the gendered impact of dwindling fishing stocks due to offshore mining, threats to environmental activists who stand up to problematic forms of development, looming water crisis in big urban areas, energy insecurity, food sovereignty, the need for reforestation, and the importance of better solid waste management in informal settlements. Almost all of them are engaging with climate justice in some way.

They are spread right across South Africa.



**3 of them (25%)** were set up in the last 2 years and **7 (58%)** had never received financial support from anywhere before. **8 (67%)** are led by women and **4 (33%)** are led by young people.

The organisations, in alphabetical order, are as follows:

### Enduevour Fisherfolk Women aka Doringbaai Fisherfolk Women

Enduevour Fisherfolk Women is a community-based organisation which has been running for several years in Doringbaai in the Western Cape that brings together women from working class backgrounds to build solidarity, create alternative livelihood opportunities within the ocean's economy, advocate for a clean and sustainable environment including protecting the ocean and environment from harm, and create a foundation for leadership on women's social and environmental justice rights. The organisation is particularly concerned about the gendered impact of dwindling fishing stocks due to offshore mining on the west coast. Doringbaai Fisherfolk Women received a grant to: a) explore how natural resources can be sourced, recycled, and upcycled to generate income for the women in the community; and b) run an organic garden that will provide food and income for the women.



**f** Enduevour Fisherfolk Women

### Environmental Traits



Environmental Traits is a community-based organisation founded in 2022 and located in Port Nolloth in the Northern Cape. Their objectives are to foster a culture of sustainable farming, improve the conditions of the homeless recycling workers and train communities on various skills related to agriculture, mariculture, and recycling in a sustainable manner. They also aim to work collectively with mining companies and small-scale fishers to improve the conditions of the environment. Environmental Traits received a grant to assist them to compile a founding document, register as an NPO and capacitate and train the leadership on governance, finance and reporting in order to strengthen the organisation's ability to manage funding and operate sustainably.

**f** Environmental Traits





## Isithembiso Multipurpose Organisation



Isithembiso Multipurpose Organisation (Isithembiso) is a registered Non-Profit Organisation founded in 2018 based in Ncera near East London in the Eastern Cape. It runs a number of different initiatives aimed at uplifting the community's standard of living by promoting active participation in addressing their own needs and eradicating a sense of dependence, improving household and community income through income-generating projects involving recycling, farming, and arts and crafts, and building the capacity of community members with a particular emphasis on women and youth.

They have programmes on GBV, health, agriculture, and disability. Isithembiso received a grant to support their agriculture programme which aims to equip farmers to produce nutrient-dense food, mitigate climate change, promote food sovereignty and

strengthen community cohesion as farmers work as a collective to bring back the spirit of ubuntu. The project will train 25 local farmers from 9 villages on agroecology and permaculture techniques, including how to make biofertilizers to build the soil without using synthetic fertilisers that harm the environment, seed saving, and establishing a seed bank, how to conduct market research and record-keeping.

 [Isithembiso Multi-Purpose Organisation](#)



## Khuthala Environmental Care Group and Khuthala Women's Movement

Founded in 2000, Khuthala Environmental Care Group is a registered Non-Profit Organisation based in Ermelo in Mpumalanga. Khuthala Women's Movement forms part of Khuthala Environmental Care Group and was founded in 2019. They are based in the Highveld Priority Area which was declared in 2007 as needing intervention to address the air quality crisis caused largely by the large number of power stations, mines and industrial activity in the area.

Their combined organisational objectives are to combat air and water pollution mainly caused by the local scrap yard, to drive responsible waste management, and to re-green the communities they work in. The combined Khuthala groups received a grant for a re-greening project in which more than 200 trees will be planted in 10 communities to improve air quality in the area. They will also workshop the youth and learners to act as custodians of the environment and to look after the trees.

 [Khuthala Environmental Care Group](#)

 [khuthalaenvironmentalcaregroup](#)



 [communitymonitors.net](#)

## Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation

Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation (MCEJO) is a community-based organisation located near KwaMbonambi in KwaZulu-Natal and founded in 2015. MCEJO's objectives are to promote sustainable projects that will benefit women, the youth, and the elderly, and to uphold all community interests such as improving quality of life and living in an environment that is not harmful to their communities and livelihoods.

MCEJO also protects their community and the environment against open-cast mining. MCEJO received a grant to: a) build the knowledge of youth, women and elderly affected community members regarding climate change and the just transition; b) strengthen youth leadership in the community; c) raise awareness, improve security and protection for community activists under threat; and d) fight for justice for their leader Mam' Fikile Ntshangase who was assassinated.



 [@MCEJO\\_FS](#)



## Mining Affected Communities United in Action – Nyakallong branch

Mining Affected Communities United in Action (MACUA) is a national network of mining-affected communities. MACUA's Nyakallong Branch was founded in 2019 and is in the Free State. The Branch objectives are to educate and advocate for Free Prior Informed Consent in the decision-making process related to mining activities conducted in their community.

They also mobilise and collaborate with local organisations that fight for access to information, and oppose various forms of abuse women, farm workers and mine workers, and are striving to prevent environmental degradation caused by mining and business in their communities. MACUA Nyakallong received a grant to improve levels of awareness amongst adults and school learners about climate change, climate justice and environmental degradation.

 [macuawamua](#)  [macua.org.za](#)

 [Mining Affected Communities in United Action](#)

 [@macua\\_sa](#)





## Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa



The Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa (MEJCON) is a national network of mining-affected communities founded in 2012 whose objectives are to promote and defend the environmental and human rights of communities both directly and indirectly affected by mining; and to ensure the sustainable use of mineral resources. Its other objectives include to train, develop, and capacitate community members to access vital information concerning mining, law, rights, processes and impacts of environmental injustices and to share and distribute that information within affected and interested communities.

They also seek to provide support and assistance to community champions, and members of affected communities, and to engage all relevant stakeholders namely all tiers of government, industry, civil society organisations, traditional authorities, and all chapter 9 institutions. MEJCON received a grant to: a) build the capacity of MEJCON's leadership and establish MEJCON as an independent entity capable of running its own affairs; and b) strengthen the network through the launch of regions in areas where MEJCON has not been fully established.



## Nelson Mandela Bay Water Crisis Committee

Nelson Mandela Bay Water Crisis Committee (NMBWCC) is a network based in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape founded in 2021. Its objectives are to democratise the Water System and push back against privatisation, to bring out the community voice in the struggle against government failure in delivering clean and safe drinkable water and to conduct popular education around the ecological implications of desalination plants and groundwater systems. NMBWCC also campaigns for the cancellation of water bills which it views as rooted in a flawed system and seeks to build community water catchment systems. NMBWCC received a grant to advance their objectives of uniting communities and building solidarity and ultimately implement a Citizen Science/



Community-Based Research approach which centres lived experiences of communities within the municipality.

They will do so by: a) conducting their own water testing which can be used to evaluate the municipality's official reported statistics in the 2022 Blue Drop Report and national guidelines for safe drinking water; b) mobilising the community of Nelson Mandela Bay through physical meetings, community assemblies, speak-outs and imbizos, and online platforms; and c) establishing a Women's Committee dedicated to the issues particularly faced by women in the water crisis as a separate space for women to speak and be heard.

## Rothoma Mudimeli Environmental Solutions

Rothoma Mudimeli Environmental Solutions (Rothoma) is a community-based organisation founded in 2021, based in Mudimeli village in Limpopo. Rothoma's objectives are to teach the community about the importance of a clean and healthy environment and to conduct cleaning campaigns in the community to build capable environmental activists. Rothoma received a grant to strengthen the leadership abilities of women activists in Mudimeli village through workshops and training on governance, finances, writing reports, community mobilisation, waste disposal and water management to enhance their ability to serve as effective environmental ambassadors.



## Serapeng sa Basadi le Ditlhare

Serapeng sa Basadi le Ditlhare is a women-led community-based organisation founded in 2008 based in Waterdal in Gauteng. The organisation's objectives are to create awareness about alternative energy, climate change and organic farming within the community. Serapeng sa Basadi received a grant to build a biogas digester and customised community kitchen that will provide food to more than 200 households in Waterdal. The biogas digester will equip the community to use an alternative source of energy like organic waste to provide food to multiple community members.






## Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization



Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization (WWAO) was founded in 2012 and is a registered Non-Profit Company (NPC) based and operating in Lephalale in Limpopo. WWAO's objectives are to transform mentalities and ways of living within the community and build power for transformative change, to build capacity of well-informed future generations and support women in rural and urban communities to organise themselves for purposes of strengthening their participation in community decision-making processes. They also want to develop an information and knowledge base that can be used to inform decisions of women and youth in the community for transformative change and protect the interest and rights of women and children in the community. WWAO received a grant to: a) raise levels of awareness and educate women by conducting a door-to-door campaign in the community on climate change and the Just Transition; and b) support their protest action which is intended to hold the local municipality accountable for its failure to enact plans for Just transition in Lephalale and to try to promote a policy of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

 Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization

## Youth Mentors and Developers

Youth Mentors and Developers (YMAD) is a youth-led and driven organisation situated and working in the Pietermaritzburg area in KwaZulu-Natal founded in 2016, whose primary focus is restoring the dignity of informal settlement dwellers in the Khan Road vicinity and neighbouring settlements. YMAD's aim is to shift the narrative of informal settlements as places of environmental injustice and degradation and create an environmentally conscious informal settlement for the future. They do this by creating safer, greener, and cleaner informal settlements through participatory community-based activities focused on clean ups, awareness drives and infrastructural development. YMAD received a grant to build a recycling hub at the centre of the settlement and to train community-based waste champions.



 YMADNPO

## 8.3. Accompaniment

**Because we believe that movement-building requires far more than just injecting funds, EJF provides a range of capacity-strengthening support as part of our accompaniment model.**

In some cases, what the organisations have requested from EJF is assistance with getting legally registered and opening a bank account. Some organisations have sought organisational strengthening support with capacitation of their leadership on governance and financial management issues. In a few cases, our accompaniment has also included support on safety and security issues. Where it is possible to provide accompaniment ourselves, we are doing so, but

we have also compiled an (expanding) database of potential accompaniment providers with whom we partner to ensure that our grantees get the kind of tailored, expert support they need. In this regard we are excited to have worked with the following partners during this period:

ngoLAW, Ubuntu Rural Women and Youth Movement, the Pathways Institute, the LifeAfterCoal Campaign, Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, the Toolbox, the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

## 8.4. Inaugural Grantee Convening

EJF has committed to hosting at least one grantee convening a year, at which we bring our grantees together to learn, exchange and grow. The first of these convenings took place in Durban from 23-25 February 2023.

The Convening had four main purposes:

- to enable EJF's grantees to connect, build solidarity and learn from each other;
- to allow EJF and its grantees to get to know each other better in order to start building relationships of trust; and
- to provide accompaniment in the form of facilitated training and discussion sessions on identified skills and content areas;
- to allow activists to rejuvenate and re-energise away from the demands of their day-to-day work.

3 delegates from each grantee organisation were invited to attend. This was because we are conscious that often only 1 person per organisation is given the opportunity to attend workshops and the like, which makes it more difficult to feed the knowledge back to the organisation more broadly. It is also helpful for our relationship with each organisation if we are able to develop relationships with more than a single individual in the organisation as this improves communication and accountability. Grantees were free to select their own participants from amongst their organisations, except that EJF requested that one of the participants be the person responsible for finances. As part of EJF's feminist ethos, we also required at least some of each delegation to be women.

Overall, feedback from the participants was extremely positive and a number of themes emerged:



The similarity of struggles in different parts of the country was striking and this engendered a real sense of **solidarity**. Throughout the convening, activists emphasised the need to stand in solidarity in the battle against environmental injustice which was summed up in the following statement from one of the participants – "If government takes everything from us, we still have each other".



Observing the rich connections and exchanges between activists and organisations across issues, geographies and generations, has confirmed EJF's approach of striving for this kind of **diversity** in the profile of organisations that we support.



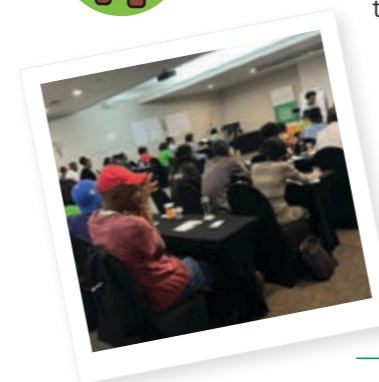
There is a strong sense of **agency** in communities. These are organisations showing initiative and developing their own solutions to the challenges that they were facing. There was a large appetite for learning from each other. For instance, participants were keen to learn about how to build a biogas digester from the women of Serapeng sa Basadi.



The fact that some participants were dealing with the after-effects of abandoned and unrehabilitated mining sites (for instance Mpumalanga) while some were from areas where mining was present (Limpopo) and some were from areas where mining is coming (Eastern Cape) enabled useful conversations with critical information-sharing amongst activists.



Environmental activists connect very well spatially and many of them used **rivers** as the basis of mapping their communities. Many of the activists present identified as custodians of the water sources in their communities.





This was EJF's first experience in putting together and hosting a convening of this nature. It was wonderful to be immersed in the energy, commitment and creativity that permeates the organisations that we have the privilege to support. The Convening certainly assisted us in better understanding the challenges and contexts of our grantees, which in turn better positions us to nuance the support we can offer and refine the way we work. It was also extremely helpful to get so much feedback from all the activists present to inform future convenings of this nature.

**Activism is exhausting work and it was also important to take some time out to relax and take care of ourselves and each other.**



There is no doubt that the environmental justice movement in South Africa is facing a web of interconnected challenges. Activists and organisations in this movement do their work under difficult conditions, with very little financial resources, and often at great risk to their safety and wellbeing. Yet the warmth running through the connectivity and solidarity at the Convening was palpable, and the strong push for exercising agency should be a source of hope.

## 8.5. Mapping the environmental justice movement

As discussed above, EJF is currently intentionally using the methodology of open calls. But in time, as EJF deepens its knowledge of the CBOs doing environmental justice work in South Africa and firmly establishes its reputation, we may shift how we operationalise our grant-making and take a more catalytic approach. For example, if there is a looming environmental threat in a particular geographic region, or on a particular environmental justice issue, EJF could issue a more targeted call for proposals which is either thematically or geographically circumscribed, or both.

We are already preparing for this by engaging in a mapping exercise in which we are trying to get a deeper sense of what CBOs are operating in particular provinces, what they are working on, how they operate, and the extent to which they are already networked (or not) into the movement. Because this is a rather mammoth task for a very small team, we have identified key provinces to start with, as priority areas. Our initial focus will be Kwa-Zulu Natal, Free State and



the Northern Cape. We started with Kwa-Zulu Natal as it is the province with one of the oldest histories of environmental justice activism in South Africa and activists there are engaging with an unusually broad range of thematic issues. Free State was selected as it is currently a new frontier in mobilisation for the movement with much activity going on to establish new networks in response to threats such as fracking and mining. The Northern Cape is South Africa's largest and most sparsely populated province and levels of activist mobilisation have historically been relatively low there. But it is facing increasing levels of threat along the coastline from oil and gas companies, as well as government's plans for a new green hydrogen plant. By February 2023, we had completed the fieldwork in Kwa-Zulu Natal and planned the Free State stage of the project. Once fieldwork is completed in all identified provinces, the results of this project will be synthesized and used to inform EJF's strategy going forward.

**EJF is currently intentionally using the methodology of open calls. But in time, as EJF deepens its knowledge of the CBOs doing environmental justice work in South Africa and firmly establishes its reputation, we may shift how we operationalise our grant-making and take a more catalytic approach.**



## 8.6. Participating in the environmental justice sector

As part of our identity as an organisation ‘by activists for activists’, EJF actively engages in activities happening in the environmental justice sector. For example, during this period, members of our staff team:

- Presented at the Centre for Environmental Rights’ Rights and Remedies activist school in September 2022.
- Spoke at the Centre for Child Law’s Symposium on Children’s Rights and Climate Justice in South Africa in November 2022.
- Spoke at the launch of Prof Melanie Murcott’s book ‘Transformative Environmental Constitutionalism’ in December 2022.
- Participated in the Social Justice Assembly in January 2023.
- Participated in groundWork’s annual community planning week in February 2023.



## 8.7. Participating in philanthropy

While our day-to-day focus is providing on-the-ground support to CBOs, we are simultaneously pioneering a model of grant-making in which we constantly seek ways to address the problematic power imbalances that have been prevalent in the funding world for so long. Funding is not a neutral exercise. The choices we make as EJF have consequences and rather than perpetuate a façade of neutrality, we acknowledge the power inherent in providing resources and seek to use it strategically to advance the interests of the environmental justice movement. The mere fact that we have chosen to fund grassroots communities directly is already a form of advocacy. Because we operate from the recognition that environmental injustice disproportionately impacts grassroots communities, EJF seeks to use the power inherent in our grant-making to challenge misguided notions that community and indigenous knowledge are somehow less valuable than Western or ‘traditionally academic’ knowledge. By choosing to support grassroots activism, we hope to send a powerful message in support of the idea that those most affected by environmental degradation are best placed to respond to it. Funding CBOs is therefore literally ‘putting our money where our mouths are’.

Our commitment to the communities we serve, and to the environmental justice movement more broadly, is to use the access we have to privileged

donor spaces and networks, to try and influence donor practice in a more self-reflective, power-conscious, equitable and accessible direction. As a young organisation we have much to learn and do not claim to be experts. In these critical formative years, we are particularly grateful for the advice and support we have received from like-minded funds. It is early days for EJF as we still need to make a name for ourselves in philanthropic circles, but we are actively engaging in the kinds of activities that can support our developing funder advocacy work – such as documenting our model, participating in donor spaces and building networks of like-minded funders.

Some funder advocacy work has already begun, such as when our Executive Director was invited to present locally at the Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa (IPASA) Symposium in November 2022, and internationally at the Global Philanthropy Forum in October 2022. EJF’s participation in these kinds of spaces has the potential to encourage other funders to consider how their support could reach grassroots communities, as well as to expand the resources available for climate and environmental justice work. It is early days yet, but we hope that this kind of continual advocacy can be part of broader efforts to shift both power and resources as we work as part of joint and collaborative efforts with like-minded funds in the global South.

# 9. Our funding and finances

We could not do this work without the generous support of our funders and would like to acknowledge and thank the following funders who have believed in our mission from the start.





Building EJF's financial sustainability has been a key focus from the outset. By February 2023, we had raised R11 549 831 (US\$680 552). Our first independent audit was undertaken by Solace Consulting. No qualification was noted. A copy of the full audited Annual Financial Statements, as approved by EJF's board, is provided to all our funders.

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as at 28 February 2023

	Notes	28 Feb '23 (R)	28 Feb '22 (R)
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<i>Non-current assets</i>			
Property and equipment	2	79 229	-
<i>Total non-current assets</i>		79 229	-
<i>Current assets</i>			
Accounts receivable	3	102 756	-
Cash and cash equivalents	4	4 027 906	3 030 026
<i>Total current assets</i>		4 130 662	3 030 026
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>4 209 891</b>	<b>3 030 026</b>
<b>FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<i>NPC funds</i>			
Accumulated funds		156 088	3 642
Equipment reserves	2	79 229	-
<i>Total NPC funds</i>		235 317	3 642
<i>Current liabilities</i>			
Accounts payable	5	89 102	-
Deferred revenue	6	3 792 274	3 026 384
Leave provision	5	93 198	-
<i>Total current liabilities</i>		3 974 574	3 026 384
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>		<b>4 209 891</b>	<b>3 030 026</b>

### DETAILED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME for the year ended 28 February 2023

	28 Feb '23 (R)	28 Feb '22 (R)
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>4 076 634</b>	<b>16 537</b>
Grants	3 924 188	12 895
Interest Income	152 446	3 642
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>3 844 960</b>	<b>12 895</b>
Audit and accounting costs	10 160	-
Bank fees	2 558	15
Communications and ICT costs	265 849	4 380
Community data	4 125	-
Consultants	98 123	8 500
Consumables, stationery, and other supplies	7 758	-
Event registration	3 200	-
Grant-making and accompaniment	1 048 848	-
Insurance	3 993	-
IT support	51 595	-
Depreciation (furniture and fittings, computer equipment)	30 816	-
Mapping the environmental justice movement	30 226	-
Memberships and subscriptions	5 000	-
Payroll services	10 365	-
Staff - salaries and benefits	1 893 750	-
Staff development, wellness, and recruitment	68 104	-
Strategic planning and staff retreats	123 787	-
Travel (incl. staff, Grants Committee and board)	186 704	-
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>231 674</b>	<b>3 642</b>



# 10. Conclusion

After many years of dreaming and talking about a movement-driven mechanism that could help get much-needed resources directly to the communities that need them most, the dreams have materialised. It has been an exciting start. By February 2023, EJF had been a legal entity for just 18 months and had had its first staff in place for only 11 months. In less than a year, we have put the building blocks of a theory of movement-building in place, constructed an inclusive and participatory system of grant-making, put an interactive 3-part structure in place consisting of our board, staff team and Grants Committee - each tasked as custodians of different parts of EJF's vision, and designed a range of systems and processes that will help us to implement this vision. We also tested our model for the first time by administering our first call for proposals and selecting the first cohort of 12 organisations that EJF is now supporting.

It is early days yet and certainly too soon to be able to reflect meaningfully on the impact of our work. We are so grateful for all the guidance that we have received along the journey so far from like-minded funds, from our funders, from NGOs that have been supporting CBOs for a long time, and from CBOs and community activists themselves. What we are doing is experimental and no doubt we will make mistakes along the way, but through regular reflection and refinement, we hope to make a meaningful contribution to strengthening the environmental justice movement in South Africa.







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