



**Environmental  
Justice Fund**

BY ACTIVISTS • FOR ACTIVISTS

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023





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# Foreword from the Chairperson of the Board

As the Board Chairperson of the Environmental Justice Fund of South Africa, it is with immense pride and gratitude that I extend my heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, esteemed board members, diligent Grants Committee, steadfast partners, and all the grantees who breathe life into our organisation. Your tireless commitment and unwavering passion are the backbone of our mission, and it is through your collective efforts that we continue to do what we do with so much joy and grace.

Reflecting on the Grantee Convening held in November 2023, I am reminded of a profound moment that deeply moved me. I was honored to speak on behalf of the board, but as I stood at the podium, I found myself unable to articulate the prepared speech. I was overwhelmed, not by the gravity of the role, but by the powerful presence and unity of the environmental justice activists gathered in that room. These are my circles, my people, and yet, the weight of the moment was unlike anything I had experienced before.

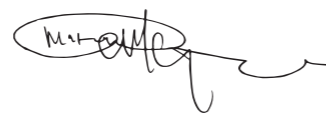
Just before I spoke, we sang "Sizabalazela ilizwe, lo khokho bethu, ilizwe la bantu bamnyama." This song, echoing through the room, transported me back to 2015, to the funeral of the late uBaba uDladla in Mtubatuba. It was the same song we sang as I prepared to honor his legacy. This connection took me further back to 2012, during the nascent days of forming the Mining and Environmental Justice Network of South Africa (MEJCON-SA), where I first met uBaba uDladla. In those early days, I was perplexed by his vision of building an organization rather than immediately deploying legal battles against the mines and companies ravaging our environment.

uBaba uDladla, with his serene and knowing laugh, would explain to me that while the law is indeed a powerful tool, the real power and impact stem from the people. He believed in uniting individuals under a common vision and purpose, asserting that true change would emerge from this collective strength.

His words resonated deeply as I stood on that podium at the EJV Convening, surrounded by comrades from across the country, each contributing to the shared goal of securing an environment that promotes health and well-being for all.

The realization struck me: we have indeed achieved what uBaba uDladla envisioned. We have united the people, and the palpable power in that room was a testament to our collective efforts. This overwhelming sense of accomplishment affirmed that we have attained the power we sought. Now, it is our responsibility to wield this power to create the impactful change we aspire to see.

To all activists and allies reading this report, my message is clear: the power is here, and the time has come for us to harness it. Let us use our collective strength to pursue environmental justice in all our communities and to end the intimidation and deaths of our fellow activists. This report is a testament to the remarkable work being done by our comrades, and I invite you to explore it, to see firsthand the incredible progress we have made together.



**Matome Kapa**

Chairperson  
Environmental Justice Fund Board



To all activists and allies reading this report, my message is clear: **the power is here, and the time has come for us to harness it.**





EJF is a work in progress.  
From the outset, we wanted this to  
be a fund **'by activists, for activists'**.



# 1. Message from the **Executive Director**

**E**JF has turned 2! So much has happened in the short time since our official launch in August 2022. Supported by a growing funding base, we have been able to expand our small team to 8, with staff now based in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town, Sekhukhune and Thohoyandou. We have also started to scale up our grant-making and by February 2024 were supporting 21 diverse and dynamic community-based organisations. Building a new organisation from the ground up is a real gift. No-one is telling you 'this is the way it has always been done'. There is something very free-ing about being able to chart a fresh path. With EJF we are trying to create the thing we always wish existed, both in terms of the kind of organisation we'd all like to work at, but also in terms of a new way of funding movements.

EJF is a work in progress. From the outset, we wanted this to be a fund 'by activists, for activists'. It is complicated to figure out how to simultaneously be part of the environmental justice movement and allies to the communities we support, but to also be honest about the fact that even though we are an activist donor, we are still a donor and having resources comes with complex power dynamics. But we are committed to finding ways to hold all these complexities, to shift power and get resources to where they are needed most – to the community experts who are leading the struggle against environmental injustice in South Africa.

**Lisa Chamberlain**

Executive Director  
Environmental Justice Fund

This Annual Report covers the period 1 March 2023 – 28 February 2024. It outlines the model of participatory grant-making that we continue to test and refine, and showcases the vibrant community-based organisations that EJF is supporting. It also shares some of the highlights of our work with them over the last year. In addition, the Report introduces the passionate EJF team who make it all possible, reflects on the culture of the organisation that we are trying to build, and holds ourselves accountable by publicly declaring our financial position.

Happy reading!



## 2. 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.

EJF's **mission** is to strengthen the environmental justice movement in South Africa by providing financial, capacity-strengthening and networking support to community-based organisations and networks working to advance environmental justice.

To give our work focus in the shorter-term, we identified the following five **objectives** to guide our work in 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.

**3** To strengthen solidarity and collaboration between existing players in the environmental justice sector in South Africa (i.e. between different community-based organisations; and between community-based and other civil society organisations).

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

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

## 3. 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.

We offer one-year grants of R50 000 or R100 000. The determination of which grant size is appropriate is made on a case-by-case basis guided by factors like the nature of the project for which the funds are sought and the organisation's capacity to handle funding. In terms of thematic focus, all of our work is geared towards advancing environmental justice but we do not favour any particular sub-themes as we are led by what communities on the ground are choosing to prioritise.

EJF understands that injecting funds is not enough to achieve the kind of impact we are looking for. 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, leadership development, assistance with getting an organisation legally registered, 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/or dealing with trauma. Because there is a wealth of experience and expertise within the movement itself, accompaniment is provided by EJF, by a partner NGO/CBO or by a specifically sourced consultant.



The EJF model cont.

To identify the organisations we support, EJF is using the methodology of **open calls**. This is an intentional strategy for two 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. Rather than coming with our own pre-conceived ideas of thematic priorities, the open calls are providing us access to incredibly valuable data which can 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 perceived as accessible regardless of a CBO's pre-existing networks or affiliations. Open calls are an important way to do that.

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 seek to become more catalytic.

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 CBOs in order to encourage and enable collaborative action. Our annual **grantee convening** has become a key pillar of driving this agenda.

Many intermediary funds are set up as donor-driven collaborations. EJF is different. From the very beginning, EJF 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 EJF's own operations, we can demonstrate the authenticity of that belief.

Working in this way also provides us with an opportunity to tap into the expertise of the communities we work with. These communities 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. This means that people who come from the communities we seek to serve are best-placed to advise us on what kinds of interventions are likely to work in communities.

For this reason, decisions on who gets support from EJF are not made by our board, but by a dedicated structure of activists called our Grants Committee. This means that we use a form of what is called **participatory grant-making**. 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. Shifting power into the hands of the kinds of communities that EJF 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.



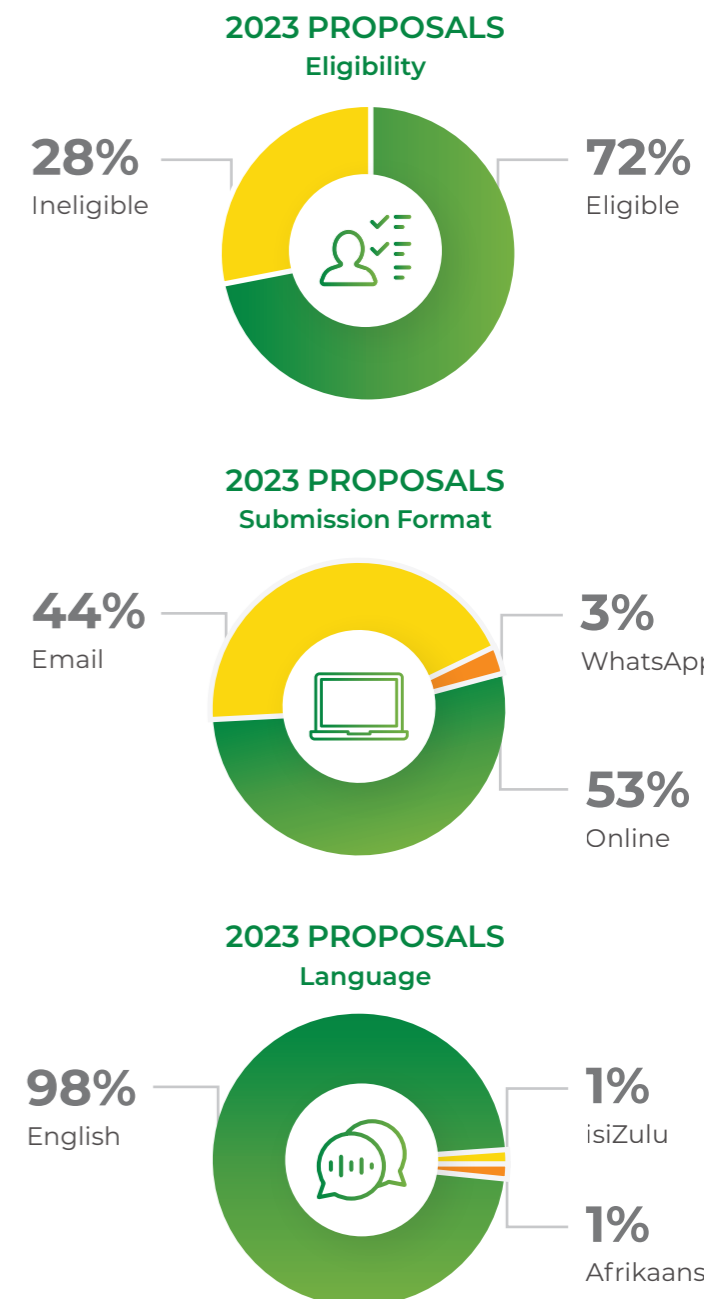
## 4. Our work

### 4.1. Selecting EJF's second cohort of grantees

By February 2023, EJF had run our first ever call for proposals, was supporting our first cohort of 12 grantees and was ready to expand out the support we could provide. The journey up to this point is covered in our first (2022) Annual Report. We released our second open call for proposals in March 2023. As before, it was important that the process was as simple and accessible as possible. For this reason, information about how to apply was made available on our website as well as all our social media channels, in multiple formats, and in multiple languages (English, isiZulu, Sepedi, Afrikaans and Sesotho). We also held two online application information workshops during the application process to answer any questions from applicants. We received a total of 165 applications, almost double the 84 we received in the first round. Our rigorous screening process took place during April and May 2023 before the proposals were handed over to the Grants Committee for deliberations.

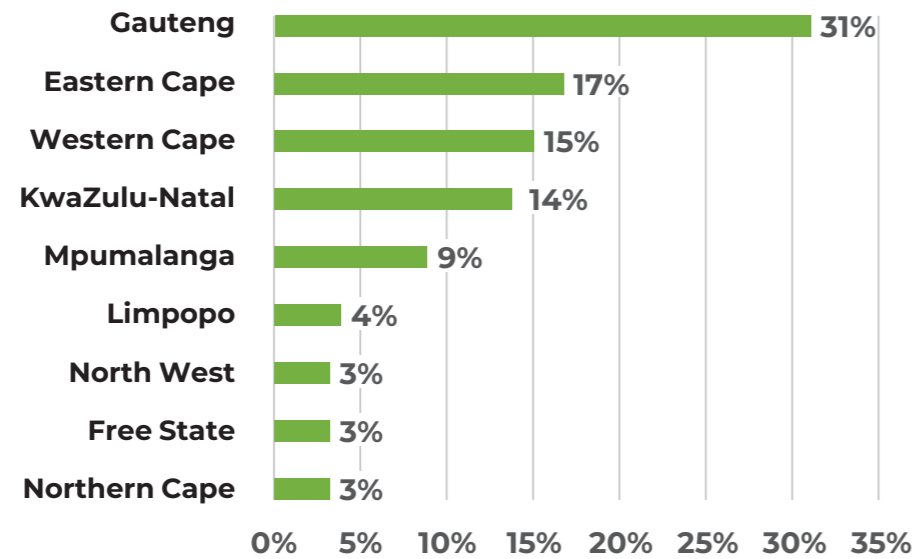
The screening process includes an assessment against EJF's eligibility criteria - which are that applicants must be a) an organisation or network based in, and part of, the community it serves; b) working on environmental justice; c) in South Africa. The screening team also speaks to the references listed on each application, examines the applicant organisation's online presence (website, social media engagement), if any, and generally assesses the organisation's likely ability to handle funds. 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.



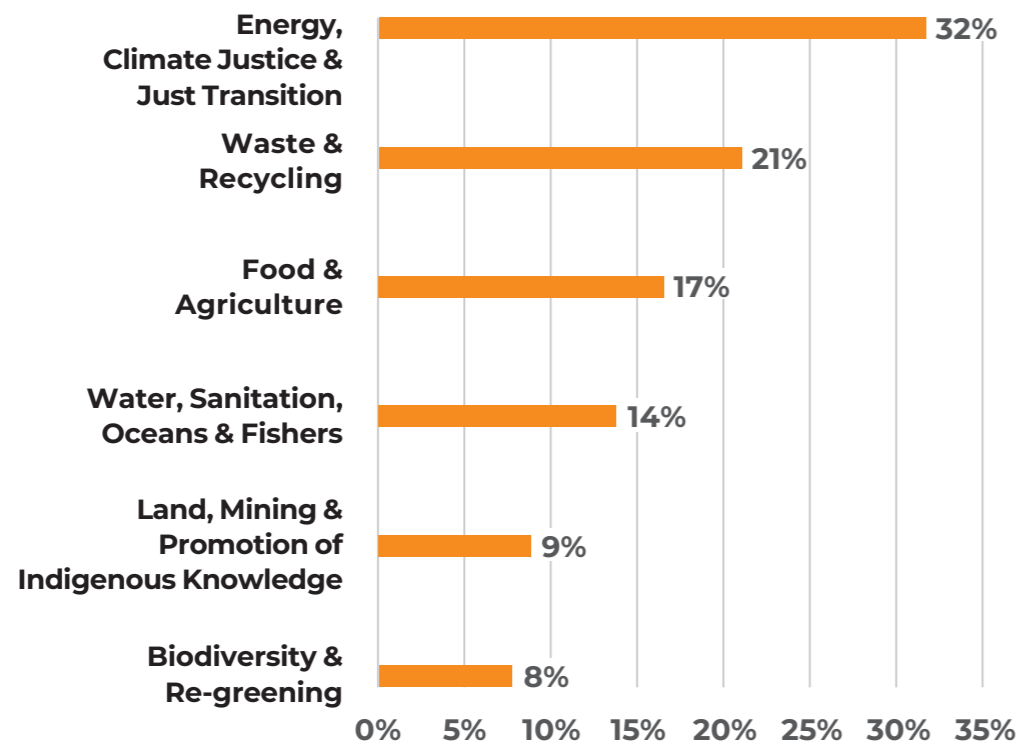
## 2023 ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

### Geographical Classification



## 2023 ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

### Thematic Classification



The full decision-making criteria are set out in our Granting Framework available on our website, but include that 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 are a mix of more established/experienced organisations and smaller/newer organisations. Preference is given to organisations led by women and/or young people.

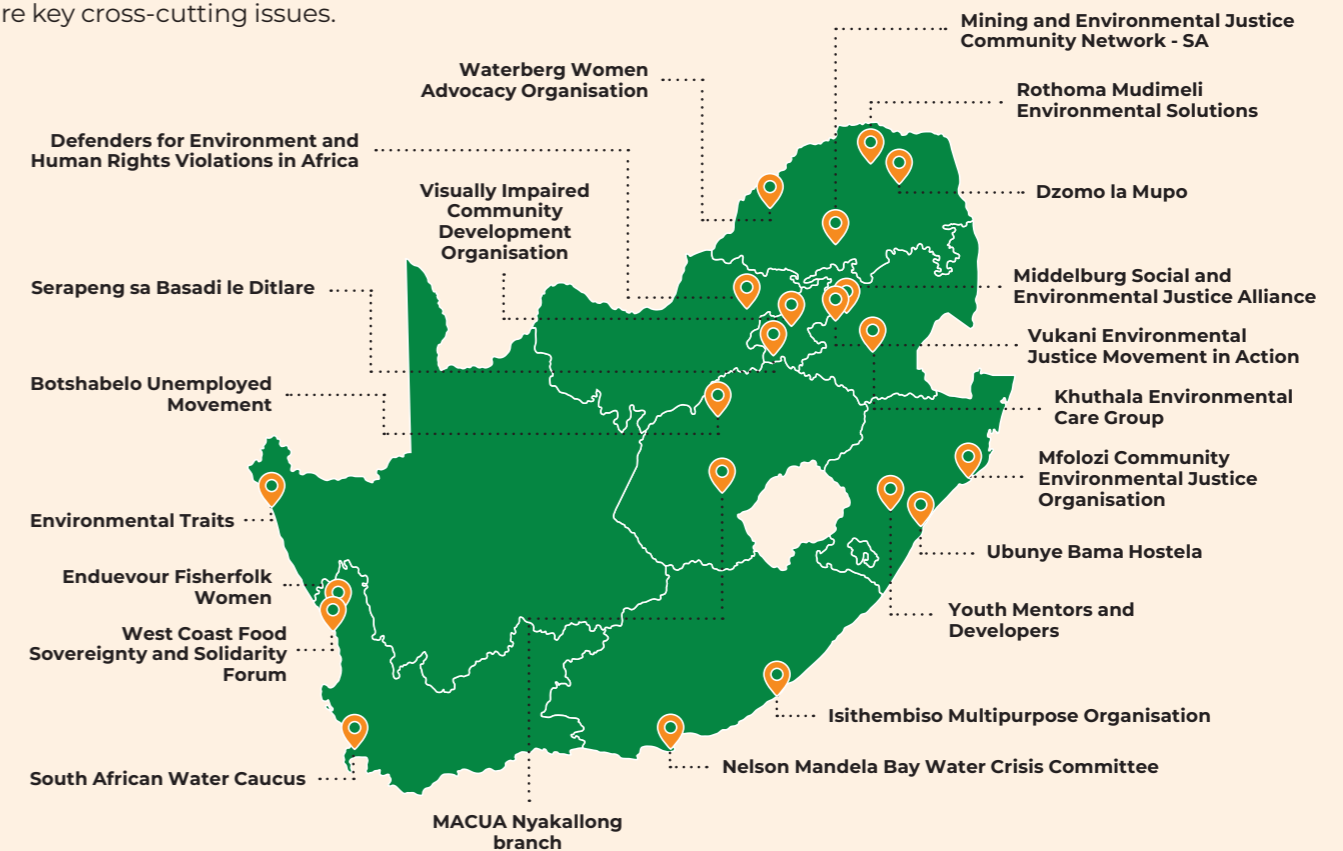
A second cohort of 9 organisations were selected in this round, taking the EJJ family of CBOs up to 21 by June 2023.

Excitingly we plan to scale up our grant-making quite significantly in 2024 and hope to be supporting close to 35 organisations by mid-2024. To this end, we released our third open call for proposals at the beginning of February 2024.

### 4.2. Our grantees

Our current cohort of grantees are working on a rich tapestry of issues including climate justice and the Just Transition, agro-ecology and food sovereignty, biodiversity protection, the promotion of indigenous knowledge, mining and land issues, reforestation and re-greening programmes, waste management and community recycling initiatives, and water justice. The impact of environmental degradation on women and youth and their respective leadership roles, and the protection of environmental human rights defenders, are key cross-cutting issues.

The organisations EJJ supports are intentionally based in all provinces in South Africa. We specifically support CBOs based outside of urban centres in remote areas, especially in areas facing particular kinds of environmental threat.



The organisations, in alphabetical order, are as follows:

### Botshabelo Unemployed Movement

**Botshabelo Unemployed Movement (BUM)** was established in 1999 and is a popular membership-based organisation located in the peri-urban township of Botshabelo in the Free State. BUM exists to amplify and address the plight of poor unemployed youth. BUM's organisational objectives are to:

- a) strengthen the capacity of the unemployed to effectively advocate for a life of dignity;
- b) address issues of unemployment, democratic control, environmental issues and social justice; and
- c) fight against deepening poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

They operate in an area facing significant threats from fracking and oil prospecting, and have a particular focus on women through their women's wing.



**EJF is supporting BUM to heighten the consciousness of unemployed people in Botshabelo about fracking and climate change through mass actions and mobilisation, and to hold local government accountable for the non-creation of plans to combat climate change and fracking.**



### Dzomo la Mupo

Established in 2007, **Dzomo la Mupo** is a women-led NPC operating in the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone in the Vhembe district in Limpopo. The core of Dzomo la Mupo's work is to preserve and revive cultural biodiversity, protect indigenous forests, rivers, wetlands and sacred natural sites, encourage intergenerational learning, rebuild confidence in the value of indigenous knowledge systems and promote food sovereignty. They focus on providing support in 12 communities – namely Vuwani, Tshidzivhe, Mulodi, Vhutu, Vuvha, Vhutanda, Tshilungwi, Phiphidi, Swongozwi, Mabvete, Lwamondo and Tshiluvhi.

Vuvha, Vhutanda, Tshilungwi, Phiphidi, Swongozwi, Mabvete, Lwamondo and Tshiluvhi.

**EJF is supporting Dzomo la Mupo to strengthen intergenerational learning, conduct ecological mapping and create an ecological calendar which shows the historical interaction between the people and the environment in the villages of Mulodi and Vuvha, which will guide the planting of indigenous trees in those areas.**



### Defenders For Environment and Human Rights Violations In Africa

**Defenders For Environment and Human Rights Violations In Africa (DEHRVA)** is a new community-based organisation (established in 2020) based in Marikana in the North West. Their objectives are:

- a) to promote and defend the environmental and human rights of communities both directly and indirectly affected by mining; and

- b) to train, develop, and capacitate community members, with a particular focus on youth, on issues such as access to information about mining, the law and human rights.

**EJF is supporting DEHRVA to set up an advice office in Marikana focussing on environmental and climate justice issues.**



### Enduevour Fisherfolk Women aka Doringbaai Fisherfolk Women

**Enduevour Fisherfolk Women** is a women-led 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.

**be recycled and upcycled to generate income for the women in the community, and to run an organic garden that will provide food and income for the women.**

**EJF is supporting the Doringbaai Fisherfolk Women to explore how natural resources can**







### Environmental Traits

**Environmental Traits** is a youth-led 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.

**EJF is supporting Environmental Traits to get up and running through legal registration and capacitate its leadership, as well as to establish an organic community food garden.**

### Isithembiso Multipurpose Organisation

**Isithembiso Multipurpose Organisation** (Isithembiso) is a women-led 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.



**EJF is supporting Isithembiso's agriculture programme to train 25 local farmers from 9 villages on agroecology and permaculture techniques, including how to make biofertilisers, seed saving, establishing a seed bank, and how to conduct market research.**

### Khuthala Environmental Care Group / 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.

**EJF is supporting Khuthala to improve air quality in their area through a tree-planting initiative in 10 communities in which young people are trained as tree custodians, as well as to improve access to safe water by protecting a local natural spring.**



### 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.

**EJF is supporting MCEJO to build the knowledge of community members regarding climate change and the just transition, strengthen youth leadership in the community, and improve security and protection for community activists under threat.**



### Middelburg Social and Environmental Justice Alliance

**Middelburg Social and Environmental Justice Alliance (MSEJA)** are a youth-led community-based organisation from Middelburg in Mpumalanga and are thus located in the heart of one of South Africa's environmental crisis zones given the extreme concentration of coal mines, power stations and other industrial polluters in the area. They were founded in 2022. Their organisational objectives are to create awareness on the effects of coal mining, climate change and the transition away from coal.

**EJF is supporting MSEJA to hold polluters accountable by enhancing community awareness of environmental health and environmental and other rights to participate in pollution monitoring processes, by conducting just transition and environmental health literacy workshops in villages around the Komati power station.**



### Mining Affected Communities United in Action

**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 of women, farm workers and mine

workers, and are striving to prevent environmental degradation caused by mining and business in their communities.

**EJF is supporting MACUA-Nyakallong to improve levels of awareness amongst adults and school learners about climate justice and environmental degradation, including the launch of research into the environmental health impacts of a devastating sewage spillage in their community.**

### 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.

**EJF is supporting MEJCON to build the capacity of its leadership as it works towards establishing as an independent entity, and to extend the network's footprint through the launch of additional branches.**



### 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.

**EJF supported NMBWCC to mobilise communities in Nelson Mandela Bay, including through conducting community water testing in order to evaluate municipal and national government reports, and creating spaces dedicated to hearing from women about the ways in which the water crisis impacts them in gendered ways.**



### Rothoma Mudimeli Environmental Solutions

**Rothoma Mudimeli Environmental Solutions** (Rothoma) is a women-led 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.

**EJF is supporting Rothoma to strengthen the leadership abilities of women activists in Mudimeli village, and to improve local environmental conditions through initiatives that address illegal dumping, and re-green deforested areas.**



### South African Water Caucus

Established in 2002, the **South African Water Caucus** (SAWC) is a national network which currently has provincial structures in eight provinces in South Africa (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, Limpopo, Northwest, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Western Cape). Over the years SAWC has served as an important coordinating platform for civil society organisations working in the water sector, and has provided government with a co-ordinated point of contact in civil society for engagement purposes. It is one of the few organisations working on water governance issues from a social justice perspective.

**EJF is supporting SAWC to identify priorities and develop a programme of action for the next two years, so as to strengthen SAWC's sustainability and improve its ability to meaningfully participate in national water governance and policy discussions.**



### Serapeng sa Ditlhare and Environment

**Serapeng sa Ditlhare and Environment** 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.



**EJF is supporting Serapeng sa Ditlhare and Environment to build a biogas digester and customised community kitchen. This digester - fed with organic waste - will power 6 communal stoves for about 6 hours a day, simultaneously showcasing the viability of alternative energy sources and building community cohesion by providing a communal gathering point for eating and learning together.**



### Ubunye Bama Hostela

**Ubunye Bama Hostela** was established in 1995 and is a community-based organisation comprising hostel-dwellers in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. Their organisational objectives include:

- a) to promote information-sharing and capacity-building in the hostel community;
- b) to amplify the voices of hostel dwellers about climate change and environmental health;

- c) to conduct community research and monitoring of service delivery and inequality in the hostels; and
- d) to deepen the participation of women and youth from hostels in campaigns on environmental issues.

**EJF is supporting Ubunye Bama Hostela to run a campaign to raise awareness about climate change and illegal dumping in 10 hostels around Durban, with a particular focus on women and youth in hostels.**



### Visually Impaired Community Development Organisation

Established in 1995, **Visually Impaired Community Development Organisation (VICDO)** is a registered NPO located in Tembisa in Johannesburg, Gauteng. VICDO was founded and is run by people living with disabilities, with the primary aim of advocating on behalf of people living with disabilities and to encourage skills development and establish support mechanisms for this community. They are already actively involved in recycling initiatives and are interested in learning more about the impact of climate change on people with disabilities and



would specifically like to deepen their knowledge of renewable energy options like solar and biogas digesters.

**EJF is supporting VICDO to strengthen understandings of the intersections between environmental justice and disability rights struggles through holding workshops for people with disabilities in Tembisa on climate justice, renewable energy and recycling.**

### Vukani Environmental Justice Movement in Action

**Vukani Environmental Justice Movement in Action (VEM)** is a community-based organisation from Emalahleni in Mpumalanga that was founded in 2015. Their organisational objectives include motivating the community to become more involved in holding both coal and steel companies accountable to the law, training the community to improve their quality of life and networking with competent people in the community and rendering multi-disciplinary services to their community. VEM are a key player in the Deadly Air case which has been an important piece of litigation holding the state accountable for poor air quality in the Highveld, with the court recognising that the poor air quality in this region is a breach of residents' constitutional right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being. Since the successful High Court judgment in 2022, VEM and its partners have been continuously on the road in communities explaining what the case has been about, what the judgment says and why it is significant.

**EJF is supporting VEM to host dialogue events on pollution and health strategies with government departments, coal industries, local community members and NGOs in support and pursuance of the Deadly Air case outcomes, and to galvanise the community to participate in the #CancelCoal Campaign, as well as to sustain their community food garden.**



### Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization

**Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization (WWAO)** was founded in 2012 and is a women-led Non-Profit Company based 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.



**EJF is supporting WWAO to raise levels of awareness on climate change and the Just Transition amongst women in the community by conducting a door-to-door campaign, and to hold the local municipality accountable for its failure to enact plans for a just transition in Lephalale.**



### West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum

**West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum** is a women-led organisation based in Lutzville in the Northern Cape, which was established in 2016. The organisation's main objective is to pursue and promote agro-ecology and food-sovereignty, and to support women to participate in small-scale fisher cooperatives or start their own projects. This comes from their commitment to promoting alternative livelihoods

due to the harmful effects of the offshore mining and its associated environmental degradation in their community.

**EJF is supporting the Forum to mobilise and coordinate a group of 40 women from different areas within the province to form a pressure group against mining, and to launch a grassroots campaign to raise awareness about women's rights in relation to environmental justice.**



### Youth Mentors and Developers

Founded in 2016, **Youth Mentors and Developers (YMAD)** is a women- and youth-led organisation working in the Pietermaritzburg area in KwaZulu-Natal, 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.

**EJF is supporting YMAD to establish recycling hubs in a number of informal settlements, train community-based waste champions and explore waste-related income generation opportunities.**

### 4.3. Accompaniment

EJF believes that injecting funds is not enough to strengthen a movement. For this reason, we use an accompaniment model where the support we provide includes a diverse range of capacity-strengthening support tailored to the unique needs of each grantee.

EJF accompaniment work over the year focused on providing support to organisations to develop a clear and defined collective vision of their desired goals and values, sometimes to deepen the organisation's common politics, and to strengthen their ideas about how the organisation should run. We provided support to organisations developing their governance systems, and their leadership, including those seeking to expand out a second layer of leadership. Some organisations also received assistance with being legally registered as NPOs or NPCs.

In collaboration with our partners, EJF also provided accompaniment support to activists who face significant and constant security threats as a result of their work. Raising the profile of activists under threat is a recognised security-enhancing response in such circumstances, and in this spirit, EJF supported the leaders of one of our grantees to attend the Human Rights Defenders summit in Namibia, organised by the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network. The summit brought together Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), civil society organisations, grassroots movements, and representatives of National Human Rights Institutions from Southern Africa to cross-pollinate action ideas and co-create possible solutions and pathways to mitigate challenges and risks faced by HRDs in the context of shrinking civic space in the sub-region.

As part of EJF's tailored accompaniment support, in August 2023 we also hosted a capacity-strengthening workshop specifically designed for some of the smaller and developing organisations, and aimed to enhance their abilities in proposal-writing, reporting to funders, budgeting, keeping track of organisational expenditures, and social media as a tool for activists.

One of the focus areas of our accompaniment work is on assisting CBOs to become financially sustainable, so we do a lot of training on fundraising and proposal-writing in order to assist them to obtain funds elsewhere. We were so excited for Youth Mentors and Developers (YMAD) who obtained a well-deserved grant from the US Embassy – well done YMAD!

Where it is possible to provide accompaniment ourselves we do so, but we also work with a wonderful network of partners to ensure that our grantees get the kind of tailored, expert support they need. In this regard we are grateful to have worked with the following partners during this period:

Ubuntu Rural Women and Youth Movement, the Pathways Institute, the Climate Justice Coalition, Digital Society of Africa, the Social Change Assistance Trust, 350.org, the Toolbox, the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network, ngoLAW, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Busisiwe Dlamini and Thozi Theko.

The bulk of our accompaniment work is focussed on our grantees (as opposed to the environmental justice movement more broadly), although we do accept invitations to run training more broadly from time to time. This is necessarily so from a capacity point of view. But one of the places where we have a concrete opportunity to be of service beyond our pool of grantees, is in relation to the development of training curriculum.



## 4.4. Grantee Convening

EJF hosts an annual grantee convening which aims to:

- a) encourage EJF's grantees to connect, build solidarity and learn from each other;
- b) provide accompaniment in the form of facilitated training and discussion sessions on identified skills and content areas;
- c) create space for EJF and its grantees to get to know each other better in order to strengthen relationships of trust; and
- d) allow activists to pause, relax and rejuvenate away from the demands of their day-to-day work.

Our second convening was held from 6-9 November 2023 in Muldersdrift, bringing together 3 representatives from each of the 21 organisations EJF supports. Having 3 participants from each organisation allows an enhanced opportunity for learning, and for information to be shared across the organisation. It also helps with carrying institutional memory if one person leaves the organisation. The different participants can also hold each other accountable for implementing what comes out of the Convening. As part of EJF's feminist ethos, we also require at least some of each delegation to be women. Members of EJF's board and Grants Committee also participated, and we were also joined by a number of partner organisations who work alongside EJF to advance environmental justice and provide support to community-based organisations. In total there were 91 participants.



As the week unfolded several key themes weaved throughout the discussions.

- Firstly, all the organisations present were experiencing similar struggles and were eager to find ways to build solidarity and look at how they can collaborate with each other.
- Another theme that emerged was the need to raise more awareness in communities about issues affecting the environment and to get community 'buy-in' for the work of activists. Activists talked about wanting to deepen the understanding of climate change in their communities, specifically with regards to how climate change is relevant to their lived realities.
- The participation of VICDO was an important reminder of the intersectionality of environmental justice and disability rights struggles. Not only did their participation conscientise other participants about the ways in which different kinds of environmental harm and climate change impact particularly on people with disabilities, but we were also challenged to make sure that the convening itself was organised and facilitated in an inclusive manner. We are extremely grateful to comrades from VICDO for their guidance in this regard, and look forward to continuing to learn and strengthen an inclusionary approach.
- Finally, a recurring theme was what resilience means for activists. There was a lot of debate around how activists could strike a balance between being tough on the issues that need to be addressed, and tough in resistance to injustice and in relation to those that they were confronting (corporations and the state), while at the same time being gentle with themselves, taking care of their wellbeing and being kind to fellow comrades. This was seen as an important part of being effective in the work that participants engage in.

You can watch the video we produced to capture the November 2023 Convening [here](#).

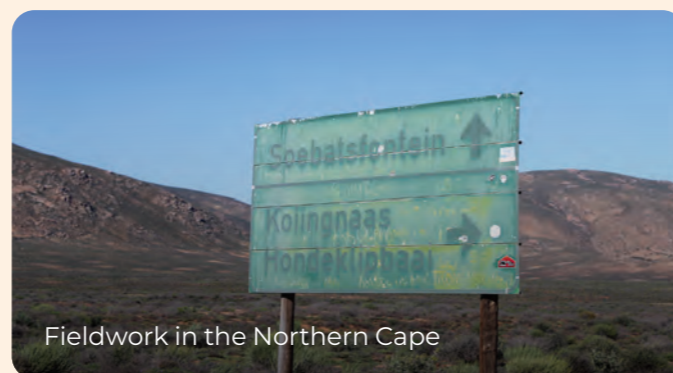


## 4.5. Mapping the environmental justice movement

EJF is in the early years of its journey. With our mission being to strengthen the environmental justice movement in South Africa, the more we understand about this movement, the more effectively we will be able to fulfil our mission. One of EJF's key strengths is that we are well-networked into the environmental justice sector. This is due to EJF being co-created by organisations and activists working in the sector itself, and the fact that EJF is currently steered and run by people who come from the sector, as captured in our logo slogan "by activists, for activists". However, we are also conscious of the need not to overestimate our knowledge of the sector, and of the importance of not perpetuating any elitism or bias which may be present in existing networks, even if unintentionally. A desire to deepen our knowledge of the extent and contours of mobilisation on environmental justice issues catalysed a mapping project.

The mapping project also emerged out of EJF's strategy of using a combination of a proactive and reactive grant-making model. Currently, we are focusing on the reactive approach as we are only making grants in response to open, unrestricted calls for applications. This is deliberately so as we are using this as a diagnostic, listening exercise to get a sense of what the environmental justice movement is currently engaged with, and asking for support for. In time however, we anticipate that EJF might take a slightly more catalytic approach by issuing more targeted calls for proposals focussing either on a specific environmental justice issue or a specific region in South Africa, or even that we might actively seek out particular CBOs to support. The mapping project is thus also part of our preparation for this phase of grant-making down the line should we decide to pursue this kind of strategy.

Initially, we identified KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Northern Cape as key provinces to focus on, and conducted fieldwork in these provinces between September 2022 and July 2023. In total we conducted 50 interviews with 48 organisations. This project has assisted EJF to deepen our knowledge of the extent and nature of environmental justice mobilisation amongst CBOs which will inform our grant-making and other support in the long-term. Along the way we have also expanded our own networks and deepened and nuanced our understanding of what environmental (in)justice looks like in different parts of South Africa. We are grateful to all the activists who spoke to us for sharing their experiences, challenges and aspirations. Looking forward into 2024, we will be expanding the project out into a further 3 provinces.



## 4.6. Rapid-response grant making

We also run a rapid-response funding mechanism which allows activists to apply for funding in emergency circumstances. This kind of funding can be used to address situations where an environmental human rights defender is under threat and needs urgent security assistance. Rapid-response funding can also be used to support participation in consultations and policy engagements about which CBOs were informed by government or industry at the last minute, which is common practice in South Africa. This is part of EJF's commitment to amplify the voices of grassroots communities in environmental decision-making processes. We can usually respond (and dispense funds in successful cases) in 48 hours.

Between 1 March 2023 and 28 February 2024, EJF made **16 rapid-response grants**.

SUCCESSFUL RAPID-RESPONSE GRANT APPLICATIONS		
#	NAME OF ORGANISATION	GRANT AMOUNT
1.	Climate Action Network South Africa	R20 000,00
2.	Mining Affected Communities Advocacy Project	R20 000,00
3.	Ibhongololutsha and others	R12 630,00
4.	Tshwaragana Ma-Afrika	R22 350,00
5.	Feed the Future	R15 000,00
6.	Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance	R5 250,00
7.	Waterberg Women's Advocacy Organisation	R7 900,00
8.	Security grant to activist at risk	R15 500,00
9.	Womxndla Community Development	R22 600,00
10.	Eastern Cape Water Caucus	R10 000,00
11.	Enviro Vito	R5 000,00
12.	Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance	R25 000,00
13.	Eastern Cape Water Caucus	R22 100,00
14.	Green Environmental Hearts Movement	R13 450,00
15.	Feed the Future	R22 700,00
16.	Security grant to activists at risk	R30 000,00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>R269 480,00</b>

## RAPID-RESPONSE GRANT APPLICATIONS

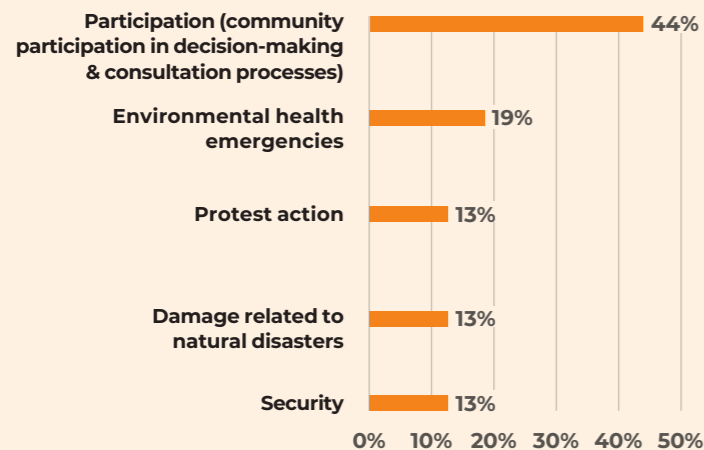
Rate of Success



Typically, when applications are getting rejected, this is because they do not meet the requirement that there be a need for an urgent response to unforeseen circumstances.

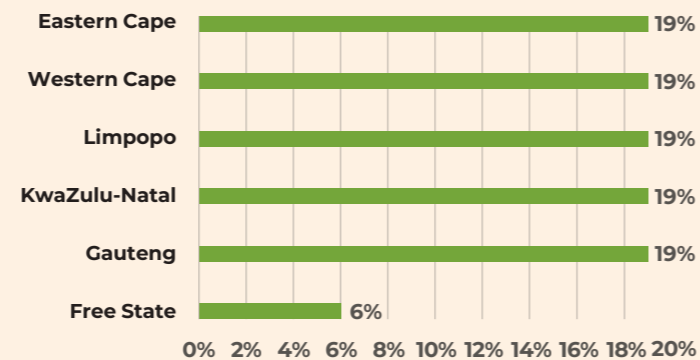
### SUCCESSFUL RAPID-RESPONSE GRANT APPLICATIONS

Themes



### SUCCESSFUL RAPID-RESPONSE GRANT APPLICATIONS

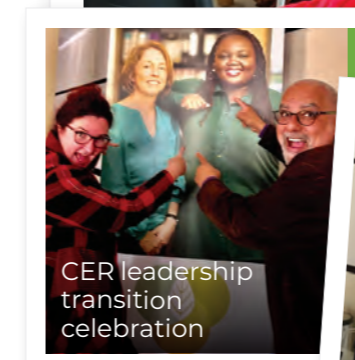
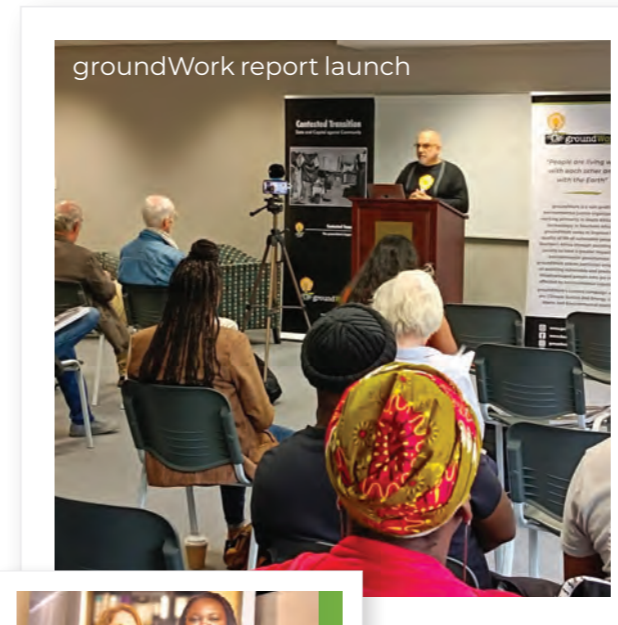
Location



## 4.7. Participating in the environmental justice sector

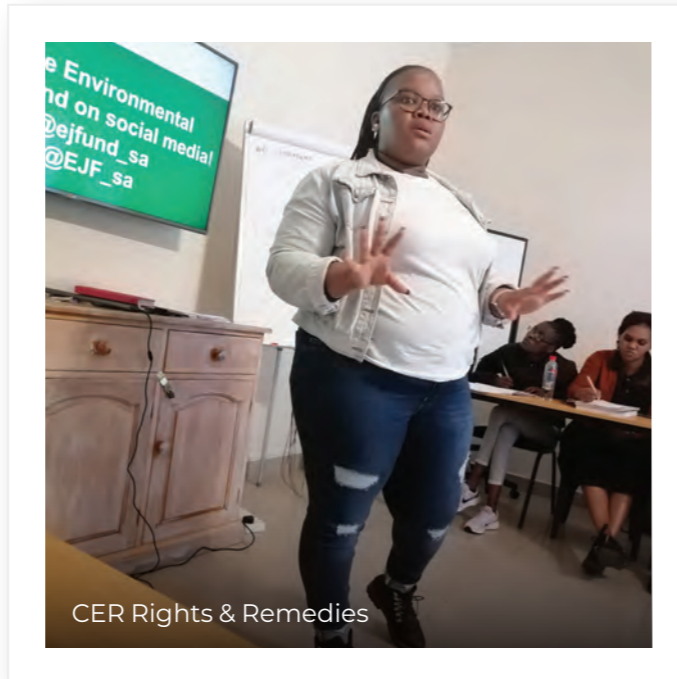
As part of our identity as an organisation 'by activists for activists', EJF actively engages in activities happening in the environmental justice sector. For example, during this period, members of our staff team:

- Attended the launch of groundWork's Contested Transition Report in March 2023.
- Participated in the digital security training run by Digital Society of Africa in July 2023.
- Celebrated the Centre for Environmental Rights' leadership transition in May 2023.
- Presented to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights in August 2023.
- Attended the National Oil and Gas Conference organised by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance in June 2023.
- Ran a training session on proposal-writing for paralegals at community advice offices at the Dullah Omar School in August 2023, in collaboration with the Social Change Assistance Trust, Community Advice Offices South Africa and Black Sash.
- Presented at the Centre for Environmental Rights' Rights and Remedies recruitment drive in June 2023.





-  Ran a training session on proposal-writing and access to funding in the environmental justice sector at groundWork's Environmental Justice School in August 2023.
-  Ran a training session on proposal-writing and access to funding in the environmental justice sector at CER's Rights & Remedies School for Activists in September 2023.
-  Attended Digital Society of Africa's awards ceremony for the Train the Trainers Programme in September 2023.
-  Participated in the careers day organised by the Wits Law School and the Environmental Law Association of South Africa in November 2023.
-  Attended the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Network Summit in Namibia in November 2023.
-  Participated in the groundWork community planning meeting in November 2023.



CER Rights & Remedies

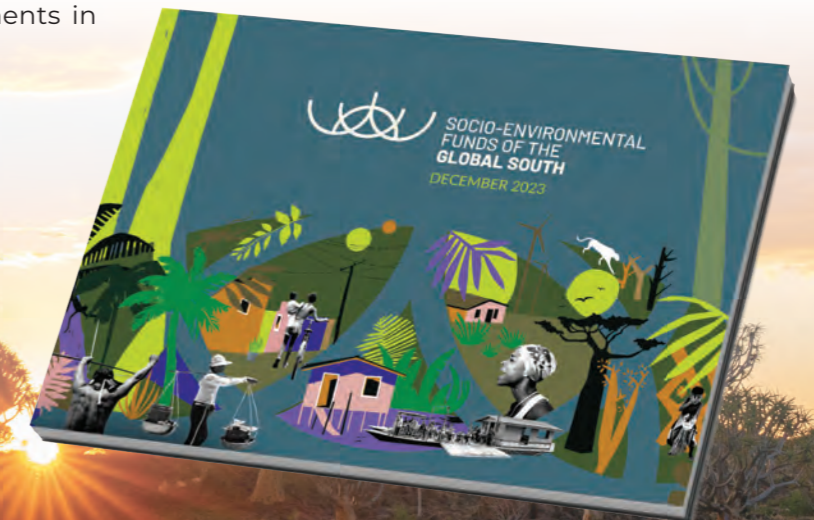
#### 4.8. Participating in philanthropy

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. 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. EJF is still early on in our learning journey and we are grateful for the advice and support we have received from like-minded funds. In order to learn as much as we can in these critical formative years and to start establishing our reputation in philanthropy, we are actively participating in donor spaces and building relationships with like-minded funders.

We are particularly pleased to have joined the [Alliance of Socio-Environmental Funds of the Global South](#) in August 2023. This group of 13 funds is working together to influence more conservative funding practices, to support the establishment and strengthening of more like-minded funds in the global South, and to provide a mechanism to unlock and channel funds, at scale, to where they are needed most i.e. communities most affected by environmental injustices in the South. Read more [here](#). In December 2023, the Alliance released our first collective publication explaining how the alliance came to be, and the contributions that its member are making to resourcing grassroots environmental justice movements in 25 countries in the global South.

We also joined the [EDGE Funders Alliance](#) in September 2023. The EDGE Funders Alliance is a community of 320 donors, foundation officers, trustees and advisors in more than 30 countries which has two main goals: a) to facilitate the emergence of connections and trust between individuals and organisations who share the conviction that systemic answers are essential to address the interconnected crises situation of our times; and b) to build a consistent voice to challenge the philanthropy sector and shift practice towards accountable relationships supporting systemic change and transformative actors. In October 2023, we attended the annual EDGE Funders Conference in Berlin. The conference brought together 270 participants from around the world representing diverse philanthropic organisations, advisory organisations, social movements and activists to reflect on philanthropy and its connection to social movements. The conference explored philanthropy's role in amplifying the voices and perspectives of the groups they support, and the need to shift power and redistribute resources towards those at the forefront of environmental struggles.

Other involvement in philanthropy in 2023 included our participation in a Global Greengrants Fund Coordinators Retreat in Mexico City in July 2023, participation in New York Climate Week in September 2023, and participation in the annual symposium of the [Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa](#) in Cape Town in November 2023.



# 5. Our people

## 5.1. The Staff

From an initial staff team of 5, in February 2024 we welcomed 3 new colleagues on board. Apiwe Mdunyelwa and Elton Thobejane joined us as Activist Support Coordinators, and Unarine Ndou as an intern.



EJF Staff

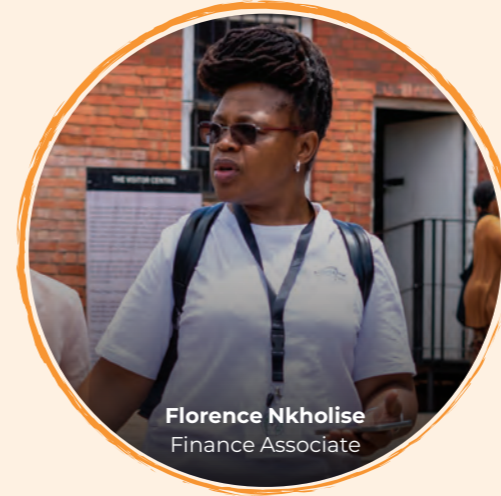


With a background in water and environmental sciences, **Apiwe** is a dynamic organiser who is passionate about working with communities to support them to strengthen their knowledge of rights and ability to influence policy. She previously worked as the Project Coordinator – Policy and Advocacy at the Environmental Monitoring Group and as a Researcher at the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute. She holds a BSc in Environmental and Water Science, a Postgraduate Diploma in Integrated Water Resources Management and a Certificate in Environmental Impact Assessment from the University of the Western Cape. Apiwe has published on 'Hydropolitics in South Africa' and 'Inequality in Service Distribution' and is committed – both personally and professionally – to relentlessly contribute to a world that is more just and equitable.

**Elton** has been a mining and environmental justice activist in Sekhukhune, Limpopo since 2009. Having worked in this field for over 15 years, he has considerable knowledge and skills in organising, mobilising, administration and community capacitation through advocacy. He has served as former National Chairperson of the Mining and Environmental Justice Community Network of South Africa, Field Organiser for the Climate Justice Coalition, paralegal for the local community advice office in Tubatse, and organiser for the legal advice offices in Sekhukhune district in Limpopo. Prior to his appointment as an Activist Support Coordinator at EJF, he also served as a member of EJF's Grants Committee. Elton is also a member of the steering committee of the Southern African Human Rights Defenders Fund.



**Unarine** is a social justice activist focusing on environmental justice, organic farming and African indigenous knowledge systems. He served as Programs Manager at Dzomo la Mupo for 3 years and has 6 years of experience as an office assistant at the Directorate of Community Engagement within the University of Venda. Unarine holds a Bachelor of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and recently completed his Masters of Arts in African Studies within the Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Heritage Studies at the University of Venda. Unarine forms part of the RAITH Foundation's Internship Programme and will be assisting EJF to expand out our project mapping environmental justice mobilisation in several provinces across the country.



**Florence Nkholise**  
Finance Associate



**Stella Kif**  
Operations Administrator



**Precious Mazibuko**  
Communications Facilitator



**Lisa Chamberlain**  
Executive Director



**Vuyolethu Mntonintshi**  
Activist Support Coordinator

## 5.2. The Grants Committee

The Grants Committee (GC) is a fundamental pillar of EJF's participatory grant-making approach, and part of how we are shifting power to communities. By ensuring that decision-making power about who gets support from EJF sits with activists working in the environmental justice movement, we try to work in ways that mean we are guided by the very people we seek to serve.

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.

In March 2023, the GC recruited Amanda Rinqest onto the Committee. Amanda runs the climate programme at Black Sash where she is the National Education and Training Manager. She is a lawyer by training and has worked with both Equal Education and the Equal Education Law Centre. She also has a masters degree in environmental law. Her experience with Community Advice Offices (CAOs) is particularly valuable for EJF given the current trend of CAOs looking for support to branch out into work on climate justice so having Amanda on the GC is a useful connection point. We are excited to have Amanda join the GC.

In 2023, the GC comprised of: Bulelwa Klaasen (Chairperson), Taryn Pereira (Deputy Chairperson), Lizeka Ntsikeni, Elton Thobejane, Samson Mokoena, Amanda Rinqest and Lisa Chamberlain (ex officio). 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.

Although it is still early days, our participatory grant-making model is working. Having now tested it twice, the value of having activists on the GC who come not just from the environmental justice movement, but from a variety of its sub-sectors, is clear. This representation enables EJF to draw on this diverse expertise within the GC during deliberations on proposals. What has also emerged is that GC

meetings have become a valuable connection point for the activists on the GC beyond their work with EJF. The time spent together in those meetings offers a platform for a rich exchange of updates, opinions and ideas around current developments in the sector. This unintended consequence is therefore a welcome addition to the ways in which EJF is strengthening the environmental justice movement as the relationships between GC members are also a form of network-building.



The Grants Committee at a debriefing session with CSVR

In addition, from the outset, EJF intended to use all its structures – including the GC – as developmental spaces. Our approach is that while we ask activists to serve on the GC, their work with us should also be beneficial to them. With this in mind, it has been heartening to hear GC members reflect on how much they are learning about grant-making, but also about all the corners of the environmental justice movement, through their participation in the GC. The fact that the GC is comprised of a mix of more experienced activists and some youth activists at earlier stages of their journey also adds to the diversity of voices and the construction of the GC as a learning platform.



Grants Committee members reflecting after the deliberations process in May 2023

Nevertheless, we have also learned some important lessons about the costs involved in GC work. The work of processing hundreds of worthy applications and having to say no to so many is really hard and takes its toll on GC members in a number of ways:

- **The work of selecting grantees is emotionally draining:** There are hundreds of great CBOs out there doing important environmental justice work and we can only support a handful of them at this point. Saying no at this kind of scale is emotionally draining. It is particularly hard for the community-based activists on the GC who come from exactly the kind of communities and organisations that the applicants do.
- **GC members are held accountable for the decisions made, repeatedly, in a variety of different spaces:** GC members report how they are often asked about why some organisations got through and others didn't, when they attend workshops and other gatherings (that have nothing to do with EJF). They are held particularly closely accountable by applicant organisations that they know well and/or work with regularly.

- **It is much more work than we initially anticipated:** Perhaps somewhat naively, we did not initially envisage the kind of volume of applications we have been receiving (84 in the first round and 165 in the second). If this trajectory continues, we can expect the numbers to grow. Furthermore, over and above the work involved in processing all the applications, in these critical early stages the GC has also been providing valuable input into the design of our processes and policies. This service is all over and above their existing workloads as busy and committed activists elsewhere.

Cognisant of all this, over the past year we have developed a sustainability strategy to put several mechanisms in place to support the work of the GC, both to ensure the continued impact of our participatory grant-making model, but also to honour our commitment to prioritise activist wellbeing. This has included initiatives like partnering with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVr) to facilitate collective de-briefing and provide individual psycho-social support where necessary. In the second round of applications, we also beefed up our feedback to unsuccessful grantees who now receive a comprehensive, 4-page feedback letter, which hopefully alleviates some of the pressure off GC members having to account.

An additional intervention here is that we have also started including the full GC in grantee convenings (rather than just the Chairperson as before). This is so that GC members can get the benefit of engaging with all the organisations that were selected, rather than just being on the frontlines of justifying decisions about organisations that weren't. This is an important part of lightening the emotional weight of the work. But including GC members in these kinds of events also has value in other ways, because they too are environmental justice activists and so have lots to share and learn in these kinds of events and platforms. This is also part of networking, peer-learning and thus ultimately also contributes to strengthening the environmental justice movement.

### 5.3. The Board

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



Some board members at the strategic planning retreat in Feb 2024

## 6. Our culture

### 6.1. Reflection

EJF is trying to be a reflective organisation and we want to entrench this as part of our organisational culture right from the start. Taking time to pause and take stock of how we are doing, hold ourselves accountable, course-correct where necessary and generate creative new ideas is even more important in these critical early years when the learning curves are so very steep. This year, we have taken 3 moments to do this.

From 17 – 20 July 2023, our staff team met in Johannesburg for a mid-year check-in where we evaluated our progress against our annual objectives, worked on our impact model and did some collective planning for the second half of the year.

From 4 – 8 December 2023, our staff team re-grouped in Magaliesburg. Together we reflected on the year and reviewed the accompaniment component of our model and our rapid-response grant-making. We planned out our expanded staff team and worked on improving our policy framework. Spending time together like this is also an important part of building organisational cohesion and was also a much-needed moment for a bit of relaxation after a really intense year.



EJF staff at a mid-year staff retreat in Johannesburg in July 2023

From 13 – 16 February 2024 we held EJF's annual strategic planning retreat involving the staff, board and Grants Committee, where we spent time as a collective discussing what it means to strengthen a movement and how we should be understanding the possible impact of EJF's work. One of the powerful insights coming from these discussions was the need to make visible the different kinds of work that happen in a movement as part of building an inclusive movement. Sometimes mothers are activists, sometimes administrators, sometimes teachers. Being an activist means challenging and pushing power FROM WHERE YOU ARE. We need to think about how to get away from valourising individuals who become the face of an organisation because this both invisibilises so many others in the organisation, but is also unfair to that leader and places such a burden on them. If we make visible all the different kinds of work, we can be more strategic because then we can leverage and use such a broader array of expertise and opportunities and connections. It was also a useful moment to remind each other that EJF is in the business of **movement-strengthening not movement-building**, because we work with what already exists.



The full EJF team – staff, board and Grants Committee – at a strategic planning retreat in Muldersdrift in Feb 2024 (Taryn Pereira featured on Zoom)



## 6.2. Prioritisation of wellbeing

The Constitution gives us all the right to an environment not harmful to our well-being. In addition to recognising the importance of the natural environment in enhancing human well-being, EJJ seeks to centre the well-being of our staff (and grantees, board and Grants Committee members) in the way in which we operate. To operationalise this commitment we are implementing a Staff Wellbeing and Career Development Policy.

As part of this initiative, EJJ supports the further studies and training of our staff. This year this included:

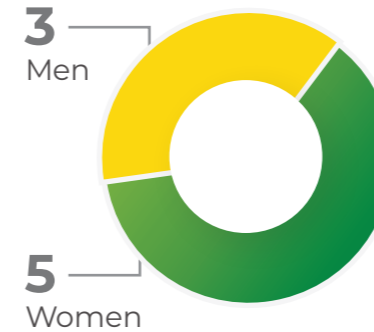
- Stella (Operations Administrator) pursuing her studies towards an Advanced Diploma in Business Management.
- Precious (Communications Facilitator) attending a digital communications training hosted by 350.org in October 2023 and starting to learn to drive!
- Vuyo (Activist Support Coordinator) pursuing his studies towards an LLM in Environmental Law.

In addition, several colleagues were supported in their physical and mental wellness regimes as we enthusiastically took up gym memberships, attended pilates classes, got to grips with new dietary requirements and attended therapy.

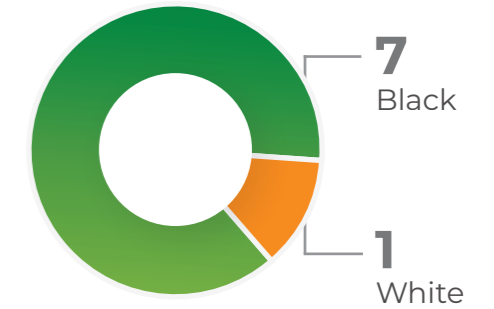
## 6.3. Diversity, equity and inclusion

For an organisation as focussed on shifting power as EJJ is, it is critical that we do not find ourselves perpetuating anti-transformative practices. As a starting point, we ensure that our structures reflect appropriate diversity given South Africa's demographics and current and past inequality. As of February 2024, our diversity breakdown in terms of race and gender looked as follows:

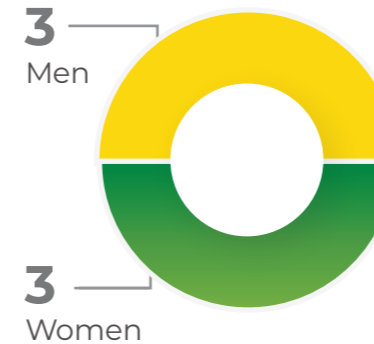
**EJJ STAFF GENDER BREAKDOWN**



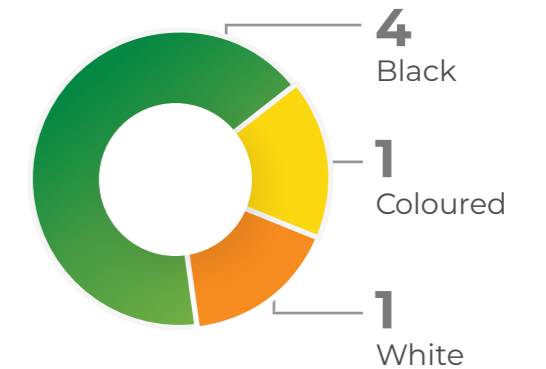
**EJJ STAFF RACE BREAKDOWN**



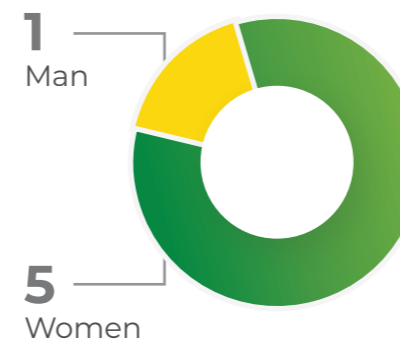
**EJJ BOARD GENDER BREAKDOWN**



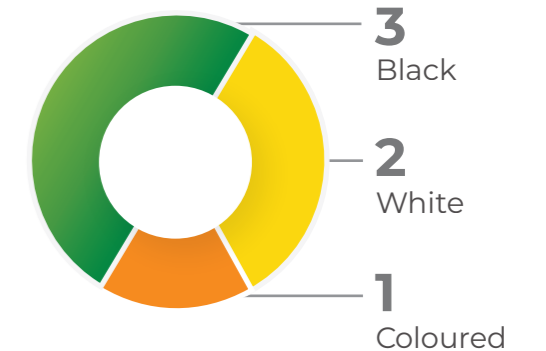
**EJJ BOARD RACE BREAKDOWN**



**EJJ GRANTS COMMITTEE GENDER BREAKDOWN**



**EJJ GRANTS COMMITTEE RACE BREAKDOWN**



While diversity is critically important, it is only part of what needs to be a comprehensive approach to transformation. Another key component of this approach is a progressive policy framework. EJJ has a Transformation Policy in place and in the pipeline is both a Sexual Harassment Policy and Grievance Policy (to address other race or gender related grievances).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) issues are also addressed throughout a number of our other existing policies and practices. For example:

- Grantee selection: Gender features prominently in our decision-making criteria for grant applications.
- Board: Board members are competitively recruited through an open advertisement process to avoid any unconscious bias in appointment processes and EJJ's Board Charter contains an explicit commitment to diverse board composition. We take a developmental approach to board membership acknowledging that it can be used to provide exposure and build the capacity and networks of women and black people on the board. All new board members are provided with induction.
- Finance and operations: We appreciate that not all staff have access to the same level of disposable income, particularly given the realities of 'Black tax' in South Africa, so ensure that EJJ covers all work-related expenses in a way which does not require any member of staff to pay for an expense upfront, even if they can claim back. In our procurement processes, we try to appoint black or woman-owned service providers wherever possible.
- Communications: Our website is available in both English and isiZulu and our communications products are now available in 6 South African languages (English, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Afrikaans and Setswana), and CBOs can submit proposals in any South African language. Where needed, we translate our grant agreements so that grantees always fully understand the implications of what they are signing.

Beyond these kinds of practices, we are actively working to intentionally inculcate an inclusive institutional culture at EJJ from the outset, especially seeing as we navigate the challenges of building a cohesive culture whilst working remotely.

This year, one of the grantees we started supporting – the Visually Impaired Community Development Organisation (VICDO) – is run by and works to further the interests of, people living with visual impairments and a range of other disabilities. Working with VICDO has posed such important challenges for us in terms of our ways of working and we have had to re-think all sorts of unconscious biases and exclusionary practices. These pop up all over the show – everywhere from how we ask grantees to sign agreements to how we facilitate training in workshops. It's been useful for us to learn about how Braille works and we are now also starting to make some of our materials available in Braille. Given the key intersectionality between disability rights and environmental justice struggles, and the critical need to better understand how people with disabilities are both uniquely affected by climate change, and can contribute to responding to it, our relationship with VICDO has set us on such an important journey. Minah, Philip, Mita and Clement and the rest of our comrades at VICDO, we are so grateful for your patient guidance and have renewed respect for the amazing work you do despite the daily challenges you face.



## 7. 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.



Building EJF's financial sustainability continues to be a key focus. By February 2024, we had raised a cumulative funding of R25 540 560 (US\$1 380 570). An independent audit of FY2024 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 29 February 2024

	Notes	29 Feb '24 (R)	28 Feb '23 (R)
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<i>Non-current assets</i>			
Property and equipment	2	151 303	79 229
<i>Total non-current assets</i>		151 333	79 229
<i>Current assets</i>			
Accounts receivable	3	560 703	102 756
Cash and cash equivalents	4	4 378 595	4 027 906
<i>Total current assets</i>		4 939 298	4 130 662
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>5 090 601</b>	<b>4 209 891</b>
<b>FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<i>Accumulated funds</i>			
Sustainability reserve fund		2 380 730	-
General reserve fund		295 759	156 088
Property, plant and equipment reserve fund		151 303	79 229
<i>Total NPC funds</i>		2 827 792	235 317
<i>Current liabilities</i>			
Accounts payable	5	255 647	89 102
Deferred revenue	8	1 802 865	3 792 274
Leave provision	5	204 297	93 198
<i>Total current liabilities</i>		2 262 809	3 974 574
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>		<b>5 090 601</b>	<b>4 209 891</b>

### DETAILED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME for the year ended 29 February 2024

	Notes	29 Feb '24 (R)	28 Feb '23 (R)
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>11 970 356</b>	<b>4 076 634</b>
Grants	7	11 676 649	3 924 188
Interest Income		293 707	152 446
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>9 378 030</b>	<b>3 844 960</b>
Audit and accounting costs		98 245	10 160
Bank Fees		9 155	2 558
Communication, ICT related recurring costs		172 135	265 849
Community Data		10 714	4 125
Consumables, stationery, and other supplies		12 919	7 758
Event registration		17 934	3 200
Grants committee		158 700	-
Grant-making and accompaniment		3 615 515	1 048 848
Insurance		10 753	3 993
IT Support		26 307	51 595
Depreciation (furniture, fittings and computer equipment)		56 369	30 816
Mapping the environmental justice movement		249 091	30 226
Memberships and subscriptions		11 197	5 000
Other Consultants		119 043	98 123
Payroll Services		10 961	10 365
Staff - salaries and benefits		3 822 022	1 893 750
Staff development, wellness, and recruitment		74 661	68 104
Strategic planning and staff retreats		379 181	123 787
Travel, incl. staff, grants committee and board		523 126	186 704
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>2 592 325</b>	<b>231 674</b>

## 8. Conclusion

It has been a whirlwind of a first two years. Early indications are that the innovative participatory grant-making model that EJF is exploring is working, and we are thrilled to be able to be supporting 21 community-based organisations in just 2 years. We continue to be amazed by how much communities on the ground are able to make happen with so little in terms of financial resources. Our work gives us a glimpse into situations of significant suffering and dire environmental harm. We see communities exploited by corporations and disappointed and angered by government. But we also get to bear witness to great hope, to extraordinary people taking responsibility for what they can, identifying as custodians of the rivers, forests and land they live on and from, and working together to protect themselves and these resources from unscrupulous polluters and the climate uncertainties to come. They have a lot to teach us.

As EJF enters its 3rd year, we will continue our commitment to try and be led by these community experts. As we look ahead into the year to come, it is a year of expansion and we hope that with the support of all our partners, we can continue to find our place in support of strengthening the environmental justice movement in South Africa.





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 Environmental Justice Fund

