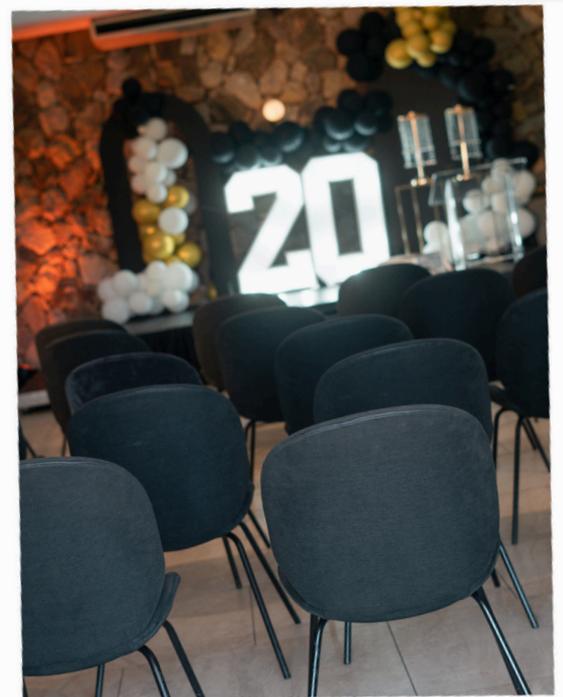




SOUTHERN
AFRICA TRUST
INFLUENCING POLICIES TO END POVERTY



The Trust 2025 Highlight Summary



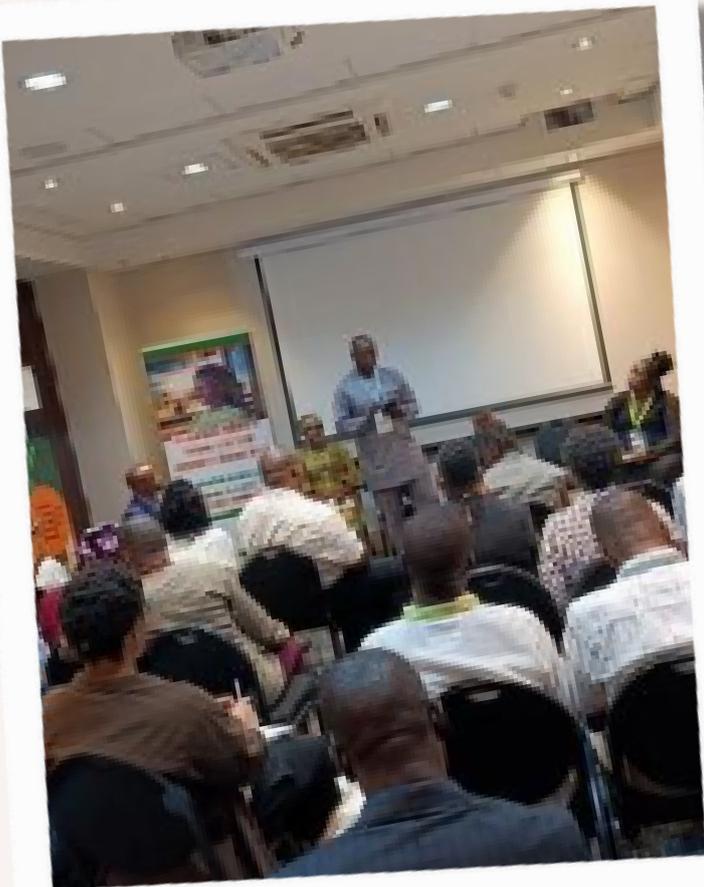


February 2025

RECLAIMING EARTH: AFRO-ECOFEMINIST IDEA LAB AT AMI 2025

In February 2025, the Trust convened an Idea Lab at the Alternative Mining Indaba (AMI) titled "Reclaiming Earth, Restoring Balance and Care in the Extractives Sector: Afro-ecofeminist Approaches to Mining Sector Transformation." The convening brought together grassroots activists, environmental justice experts, and policy actors to bridge community experiences with legislative processes, centring the voices of those most impacted by mining—particularly women facing discrimination, erasure, and gender-based violence.

"THE CONVENING AFFIRMED THAT TRANSFORMING THE EXTRACTIVES SECTOR REQUIRES PLACING COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE,"



Through facilitated dialogue across three themes—Balance, Care and Humanity; Justice and Equality; and Community Stewardship and Sustainability—the Idea Lab sparked a post-convening action plan focused on feminist organizing spaces, regional advocacy, South-South collaborations, and community-led interventions.

The convening affirmed that transforming the extractives sector requires placing communities at the centre of natural resource governance, integrating indigenous knowledge, and building cross-border solidarity rooted in care, justice, and collective resistance.



May 2025

TRANSFORMING TRADE: HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON TARIFFS AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The Trust co-convoked a High-Level Dialogue with the SADC Parliamentary Forum to address how new US tariffs and the lapse of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in September 2025 threaten to deepen colonial trade legacies and gendered economic injustices across SADC. The dialogue reframed tariffs not as technical trade adjustments but as structural violence—tools of economic exclusion that lock the region into extractive models as raw material exporters while devastating women's livelihoods, particularly in garment sectors where over 80% of Lesotho's apparel exports depended on AGOA.

"THE CONVENING CHALLENGED THE REGION'S ANTI-POOR, PATRIARCHAL, AND ECOLOGICALLY DESTRUCTIVE TRADE STRATEGY, CALLING FOR FEMINIST AND PAN-AFRICAN ALTERNATIVES"



Through testimony from young women facing job losses in Lesotho's textile industry, participants connected macro-level trade policies to lived realities of deepening poverty and inequality. The convening challenged the region's anti-poor, patriarchal, and ecologically destructive trade strategy, calling for feminist and Pan-African alternatives rooted in value addition, regional supply chains, support for women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and advancing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a tool for intra-African solidarity and inclusive, transformative economic justice.



June 2025

RE-IMAGINING YOUTH POWER: MALAWI YOUTH SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Trust participated in the Youth Summit for Democracy and Human Rights in Lilongwe, Malawi (June 25-26, 2025), convened by Youth and Society (YAS) and the Youth-Decide Campaign. Bringing together over 350 participants—including young people, government officials, and regional delegates—the summit marked a critical moment ahead of Malawi's 2025 general elections. The Trust facilitated a dedicated breakaway session titled "Towards an Accountability Framework for the Youth Manifesto," co-creating tools to transform the National Youth Manifesto 2025-2030 from a policy document into an active instrument of social accountability.

"THE SESSION EMPHASIZED MOVING BEYOND 'LAUNCH AND FORGET' SYNDROME BY DEVELOPING MANIFESTO IMPLEMENTATION TRACKERS, STRUCTURED ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS, AND POST-ELECTION MONITORING SYSTEMS."



The session emphasized moving beyond "launch and forget" syndrome by developing manifesto implementation trackers, structured engagement mechanisms, and post-election monitoring systems. The summit culminated in government commitments to finance and implement manifesto priorities, and the establishment of a Youth Accountability Taskforce—shifting youth inclusion from tokenism to genuine youth-led governance where political power-holders are held accountable not just at the ballot box, but every day through continuous civic engagement and responsive politics.



August 2025

BUILDING BRIDGES: THIRD SOUTHERN AFRICA GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PREVENTION FORUM

The Trust co-convened the Third Southern Africa GBV Prevention Forum (August 19-21, 2025) in Midrand, South Africa, with the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV). The forum brought together participants from seven SADC countries to address GBV as a systemic crisis rooted in patriarchy, underfunded services, and exclusion of marginalized groups.

"THE FORUM EMPHASIZED SHIFTING FROM POLICY RHETORIC TO COMMUNITY-LED IMPLEMENTATION, STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER SOLIDARITY, AND POSITIONING GBV PREVENTION AS A REGIONAL PRIORITY"

The Trust contributed three critical dimensions: examining the shrinking funding context for GBV interventions, amplifying youth voices through tertiary institution networks, and elevating the care economy's intersection with GBV as an economic justice issue. Discussions explored Technology-Facilitated GBV, survivor-centered justice innovations, engaging men in norm transformation, and African-led funding models. The forum emphasized shifting from policy rhetoric to community-led implementation, strengthening cross-border solidarity, and positioning GBV prevention as a regional priority for upcoming platforms like the G20 Summit under South Africa's presidency.





October 2025

DECOLONIAL STORYTELLING: AFROTELLERS CONFERENCE 2025

The Trust participated in the Afrotellers Conference 2025 (October 22-25) in Johannesburg, presenting its Learning Framework and Communications Strategy accompanied by five partner organisations from across SADC. The presentations positioned storytelling as a tool for challenging power through shifting narratives and confronting colonial knowledge hierarchies that erase African wisdom and agency. Conference themes explored the intersection of storytelling with social justice, youth leadership, digital innovation, and art as activism—affirming that narrative agency is central to reclaiming African histories and shaping public consciousness.

"THE PARTICIPATION REVEALED AN OVERWHELMING DEMAND FOR SUSTAINED COLLABORATION, LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR DECOLONIAL STORYTELLING AND LEARNING LAUNCHING IN 2026"



Feedback validated The Trust's approach while calling for deeper incorporation of African epistemologies (Ubuntu, African feminism) and inclusive disability justice frameworks. The participation revealed an overwhelming demand for sustained collaboration, leading to the establishment of a Community of Practice for Decolonial Storytelling and Learning launching in 2026—creating space for advocates and changemakers to share methodologies, decolonise knowledge systems, and co-create tools and learning approaches that centre marginalized voices in advocacy and social change.

Interested in the Community of Practice? Scan to sign up here:





November 2025

DARIRO 1.0: BUILDING CIVIC FUTURES TOGETHER

The Trust convened the inaugural Civic Futures Roundtable (November 19-20, 2025) in Pretoria, South Africa, bringing together human rights defenders, feminist organizers, youth collectives, and activists from across Southern Africa. The gathering moved beyond reactive advocacy—equipping participants with foresight tools to anticipate political, social, economic, and technological disruptors while co-creating adaptive strategies for the region's civic space.

"DARIRO 1.0 MARKS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY TOWARD CO-CREATING A SOUTHERN AFRICA CIVIC FUTURES LEARNING AGENDA—OWNED BY CIVIC ACTORS—TO GUIDE ADVOCACY, LEARNING, STRATEGY, AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION IN NAVIGATING AN INCREASINGLY CONTESTED CIVIC SPACE ACROSS THE REGION."



Through scenario labs, deep reflection, and a powerful Freedom Excursion connecting participants to liberation legacies, the roundtable built cross-border solidarity networks rooted in intersectional feminist values. Participants co-developed practical foresight tools, strengthened connections across movements, and made collective commitments to build resilience across Southern Africa's civic ecosystem. DARIRO 1.0 marks the beginning of a journey toward co-creating a Southern Africa Civic Futures Learning Agenda—owned by civic actors—to guide advocacy, learning, strategy, and collaborative action in navigating an increasingly contested civic space across the region.



December 2025

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE 2025

The Trust coordinated a 2025 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign across Southern Africa, bringing together partners from Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Botswana to demand a region free from violence against women and girls. The campaign emphasized the fast-growing and often invisible threat of digital violence—from online harassment to technology used to silence, shame, or harm women and girls—reaffirming that violence in digital spaces requires the same urgent response as all other forms of abuse.

"AS THE 16 DAYS CONCLUDE, THE TRUST RECOMMITS TO SUPPORTING FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND ADVANCING THE FIGHT TO END GBV—ONLINE AND OFFLINE—AS A 365-DAY RESPONSIBILITY, AFFIRMING THAT A SOUTHERN AFRICA FREE FROM VIOLENCE IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT NECESSARY..."



Young people from tertiary institutions stepped forward with leadership and innovation, civic formations strengthened solidarity, and men and boys joined as allies to ensure digital platforms become safer, more inclusive spaces for expression and justice. The campaign mobilized content creators, activists, policymakers, and communities to amplify survivor voices and hold institutions accountable. As the 16 days conclude, The Trust recommits to supporting feminist movements and advancing the fight to end GBV—online and offline—as a 365-day responsibility, affirming that a Southern Africa free from violence is not only possible but necessary, beginning with collective action across every home, community, and digital space.



December 2025

THE TRUST'S 20 YEAR CELEBRATION

The Trust convened a combined staff and Board retreat that also marked the celebration of our 20-year journey. The retreat brought together staff, Trustees, implementation partners, funding partners, and invited guests. The retreat created space for deep reflection on The Trust's history, values, and future direction, while also celebrating key milestones. Reflections were complemented by moments of celebration through poetry, music, food, and storytelling. Importantly, a few implementation partners shared impact stories that highlighted the lived realities, lessons, and change emerging from The Trust's work across the region.

As we close the chapter on our twenty-year journey of impact, we step into our third decade remaining committed to amplifying community voices, challenging inequality, decolonizing knowledge systems, and advancing our vision: an integrated Southern Africa where all people live empowered and fulfilled lives.

"CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS OF STRENGTHENING VOICES AND SHAPING COMMUNITY AGENCY"

