

ANNUAL **REPORT** 2022



ACT UBUMBANO

1. Introduction

This report presents activities of ACT Ubumbano in 2022.

ACT Ubumbano is a voluntary association and a registered Non-Profit Organisation. Its core business is convening spaces where people can reflect, connect, analyse and plan how to take forward issues that affect their communities, and their ability to engage the struggle for justice.

The higher-level goal for ACT Ubumbano is to develop new forms of action for social justice that contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality by accompanying and supporting communities in their struggles. This is based on the joint conclusion that social change requires increased community agency, mobilisation, and voice. ACT Ubumbano activities seek to support communities in the assertion of their agency and voice.

2. Promoting Community Voice & Action

2.1. Solidarity Hub

The annual Solidarity Hub took place in Johannesburg in November and was oversubscribed. Ninety people from the region and beyond engaged in a critical reflection process using the SEE JUDGE ACT method of social analysis, and were able to make new connections with others facing similar challenges. Issues discussed included gender-based violence, the dignity of LGBTIQ people, economic and environmental justice, and struggles for democracy in places like Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

2.2. Learning Hubs

There was great enthusiasm for in-person events after the COVID lockdown isolation, and ACT Ubumbano successfully held three Learning Hubs in the year. Activists were fully engaged as experimentation with new facilitation methods helped elicit new insights into organisational practice.

2.3. Critical Conversations

Critical Conversations are opportunities to deepen dialogue on topical issues, and is suited to online formats. Two of these new convenings were held in the year.

The first provided an opportunity for the board and other strategic partners to engage in person and online on the topic of philanthropy and funding practice, and to challenge the power dynamics that continue to define work in this sector. Titled "Beyond Rhetoric: Transforming Philanthropic/Donor Practice Now", the event had twenty-five people in the room in Johannesburg, and another 79 online from various parts of the world.

The second Critical Conversation was titled "In Defence of our Own: Building Power and Solidarity in Community" and was about shrinking civic space and the threats against those who stand in solidarity with people defending their dignity. Forty-nine people from countries in the region and globally were able to reflect on what we can do to support defenders of human rights, and to push back against the might of states and corporations.

2.4. Ubumbano Community Voice Project

The Ubumbano Voice App and Website have continued to provide a platform for communities to tell their stories of struggle and to cross-pollinate ideas on various issues. The training of activists in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, combined with the new hosting partnerships with

ACT Alliance Forums in Malawi and Zambia and the continued hosting function provided by ZIMCODD, has seen an increase in the number of stories posted on the app.

However, for the period January to October this year, there has been a 24% decrease in the number of visitors to the Ubumbano Voice website and app compared to the period last year. The support for the development of an alternative news platform with Yetu Collective has not provided the expected boost to amplify these voices that was expected. This is an area that is proving difficult to navigate – there is great energy from community activists, but it is not being translated into an amplified expression.

2.5. Masithethe- Let's Talk Initiative

The Masithethe Initiative was a call to dialogue, reflection, and action. ACT Ubumbano, in collaboration with the Faith To Action Network and Brot für die Welt, partnered with ten faith-based and youth organisations in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, to conduct inter-generational dialogues on sexual and reproductive health and rights. This project brought faith leaders and young people in their communities and congregations together to talk about the issues that affect young people and faith communities. Community activities conducted included menstrual hygiene talks and drives, radio panel discussions, youth conferences, young adults brunch sessions on positive sexuality, and men and boys' dialogues. The activities sought to challenge behaviours and practices that undermine the dignity and rights of people in Southern Africa. Over 5,650 faith leaders and youth were reached through direct engagement.

2.6. Welcoming the Stranger

ACT Ubumbano has been engaged in a 2-year consultative process with ecumenical organisations that aim to advance women's rights and uphold human dignity for all. The Initiative saw the publication of an online guide called "Women's Rights in Christian Communities Consultation: Facilitators' Guide."

ACT Ubumbano, with support from F2A, participated in the Welcoming the Stranger, Shaping the Future, a two-day conference for faith and FBO leaders exploring the important role faith and faith communities play in welcoming and integrating refugees, migrants and internally displaced people. The conference was hosted by the Lutheran World Federation, HIAS and Islamic Relief Worldwide. It was an opportunity to reflect on our own settings and review how we can be much more responsive to the needs of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people.

Four faith leaders attended the welcoming the stranger session in Addis Ababa. They had the opportunity to share their experiences and engage with the African Union Advocacy office.

2.7. Solidarity Support Facility and the Accompaniment Project

Ongoing management of the Solidarity Support Facility is not only about ensuring financial reporting on the funds advanced. It seeks to deepen the conversation with activists and organisations working with communities. The team has visited partners in Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Eswatini, Malawi, and Mozambique.

There was an overwhelming response to this year's call for proposals. Seventy-one new grants were made ranging from R10,000 to R30,000 for time-bound

solidarity and social justice actions by partners in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. These actions may be responses to the impact of climate change, or environmental, gender and economic injustice on communities, or they may be campaigns to change particular situations that communities are struggling with.

The online grants management system is operational and was successfully initiated during this year's call for proposals. It cuts down on administrative time, and ensures that there is proper control and accountability for the process. Training to maximise the interface with the financial management system to ensure efficiency in accounting for disbursed funds is currently being conducted.

2.8. Solidarity in Response to the Floods in KwaZulu Natal

Act Ubumbano supported the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) in coordinating efforts by churches to assist communities affected by the floods in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

2.9. Uhambo – Solidarity Visit by UK Faith Leaders

ACT Ubumbano was invited to present its work and share in a week-long visit to the Church Land Programme and partners in KwaZulu Natal. The week-long exchange built new connections, and provided an affirmation of ACT Ubumbano's approach to global solidarity and partnership.

3. Documenting and Learning from our Practice

3.1. Documenting Solidarity Practice

As part of the accompaniment process, the Act Ubumbano team is supporting the documenting of the work of partners, with the intention of developing resources for improving organising and mobilising approaches, and as resources to the general populace. Work is at an advanced stage on the following projects:

- Freedoms SA: developing and formatting content for an app to assist people in expunging criminal records. The main target user group would be people wanting to check if they have a criminal record, whether / when they are eligible to apply for expungement (or a pardon) and how to apply.
- WONECA: Guideline on gender-just practice in climate change responses.
- Lulibo: Using cartoons / animation, the innovative community dialogue approach is captured for learning by others.

3.2. Masithethe Video Documentation

The Masithethe Dialogue event hosted in Johannesburg provided the opportunity to capture the voices of young people and faith leaders in video, and to publish them on the website. This is direct voice of partners, and has been well received by those working on SRHR within the faith community.

3.3. Documenting the ACT Ubumbano Process

The "Origins, Identity, and Practice" documentation of Act Ubumbano's journey was published and launched. It draws on the experiences and interpretations of co-travellers on this journey, and explores what it means to be in solidarity with those who struggle for their dignity.

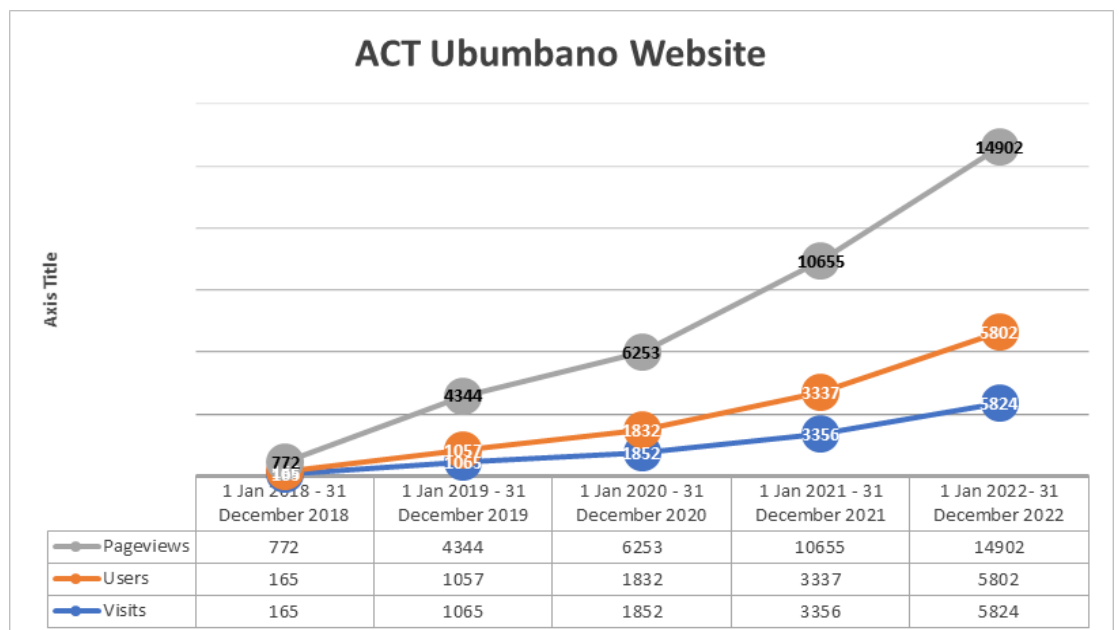
3.4. ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice Africa

Act Ubumbano and the ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice for Africa, have engaged in a process to roll-out a gender policy in the region. The process has involved online training sessions with forty-seven ACT Alliance partners in Africa. A general invitation to engage resulted in seventy-four respondents

from forty-six organisations in twenty-three countries. Three training sessions were held with three strands interwoven into each one: Theological underpinnings, understanding gender concepts within a socio-political framework in which religion plays a key part, and organisational gender and gender-related policy-development.

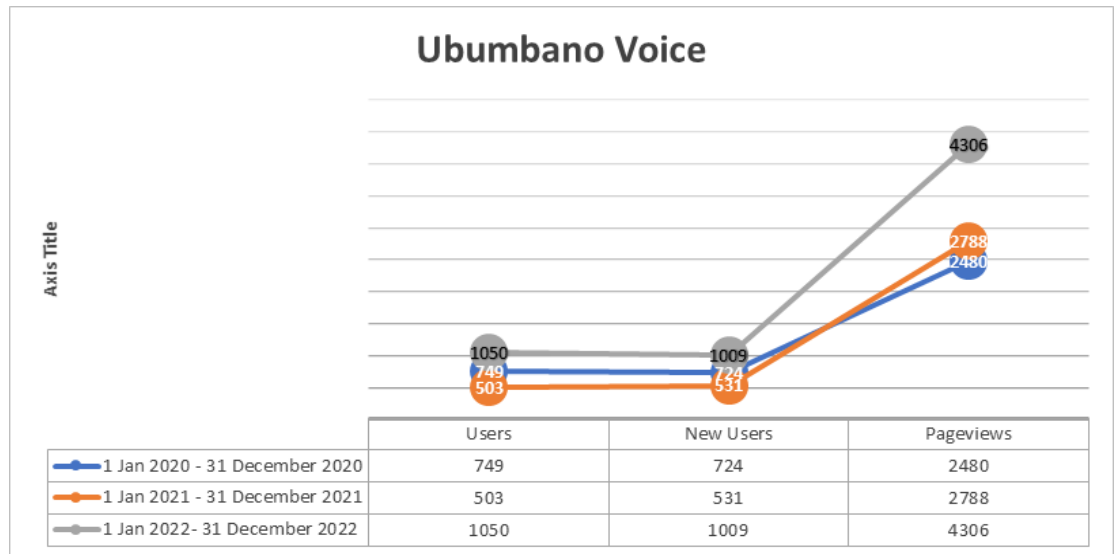
3.5. Communication and Social Media

The monthly newsletter continues to be very popular, and is a platform to promote the work of partners and to alert the community to a range of opportunities. The organisational website is a repository for the work done, and has audio-visual sections that capture the spirit of ACT Ubumbano. The Ubumbano Voice Website and App is an important platform for local stories of struggle and resistance.



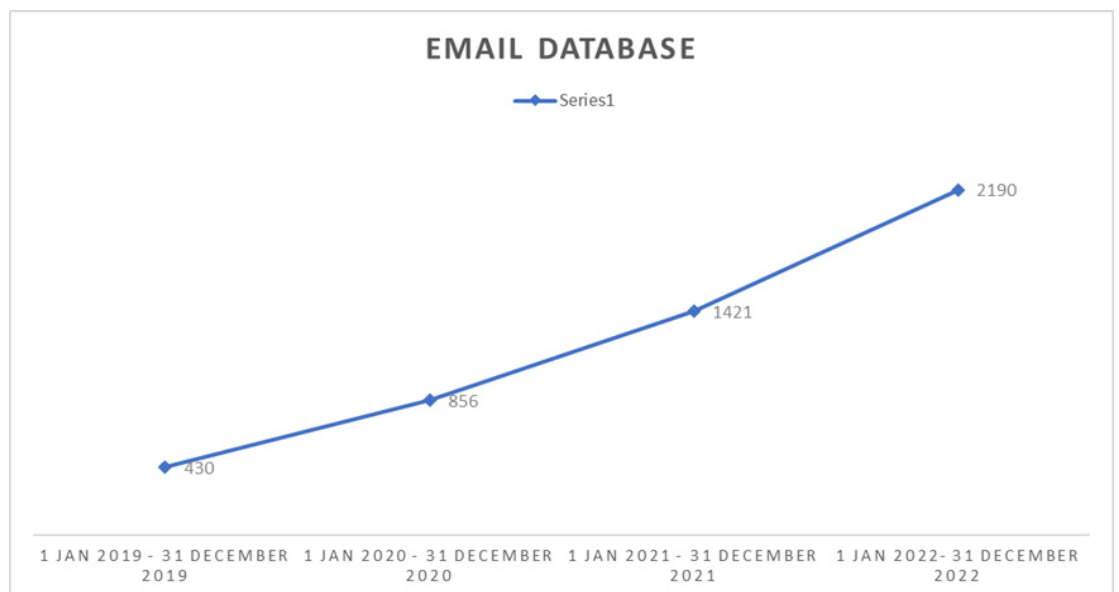
The ACT Ubumbano website continues to grow, from 772 pageviews in 2018 to 14902 in 2022. The average year on year growth

on the number of website visits and pageviews is 76% and 51% respectively.



The Ubumbano Voice website page views continue to grow, from 2480 in 2020 to 4036 in 2022. The number of users and

pageviews for Ubumbano Voice increased each year over the period by 40% and 74% respectively.



The number of subscribers to the newsletter database continues to increase year-on-year from 430 in 2019 to 2190

is 2022. Over the period, a total of 105 campaigns have been sent to the database with an average open rate of 28.64%.

4. Resourcing Solidarity

4.1. Donor & External Relations

New funding proposals have been submitted to Brot fur die Welt and ACT Church of Sweden for 2023 onwards. A similar proposal was submitted to Open Society Foundations – Africa. Ford have indicated they will support ACT Ubumbano in the new year. Christian Aid's current extended support runs until March 2023, and a new longer terms relationship is being discussed with the London and Harare offices.

New funders are always being sought in order to increase the flow of financial resources to community-based organisations.

5. Institutional Work

5.1. Governance

The Board and its committees have met regularly in 2022, including a successful AGM at which the unqualified audit report was approved.

A comprehensive Human Resources policy was adopted to go along with the Financial Management manual. The Board has committed to finalizing a Gender Policy and other guidelines that would benefit the organisation.

5.2. Financial Management

ACT Ubumbano has completed another unqualified annual audit, and the audited financial statements are available on the website.

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