




Reach for Recovery Annual Report

2024/2025





Reach for Recovery is a registered nonprofit organisation and a public benefit organisation that has been providing practical and emotional support to breast cancer patients and their families since 1967.

Our services are available in seven of the nine provinces in South Africa and include practical and emotional support to patients in hospitals, follow-up care, home visits, support groups, the Ditto Project, breast health education programmes, and a dynamic social media initiative. We use community and media outreach programmes to educate the public about breast cancer, the services on offer, the importance of early detection, and the eradication of cancer-related stigma. We stand for equitable service delivery that pays special regard to underserved women with breast cancer. We invest in our care initiatives while maintaining a highly disciplined approach to managing our human and financial resources to ensure prolonged sustainability.

Our remarkable volunteers, most of whom are breast cancer survivors, are a precious gift to our organisation. Their collective effort as compassionate care partners is invaluable and central to who we are as an organisation. We fulfil our mission with the utmost respect and sensitivity to the needs of the people who use our services.



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What sets us apart

Reach for Recovery is a crucial partner in the breast cancer landscape in South Africa and occupies a specific niche distinguished by responsive services and the firm belief that breast cancer survivors have the potential to thrive. In 2024, with the pandemic still faintly visible in our rearview mirror, South Africa entered its seventh democratic administration, characterised by a fresh enthusiasm for collaborative work as an approach to solving complex problems. Reach for Recovery is deeply connected to the communities in which it delivers services and is in lockstep with the prevailing spirit of the times. Working together and with compassion in a rich latticework of human relationships is part of our DNA.

As people who bring about positive change, we celebrate how far we have come and recognise that significant work still awaits us. Most of the women we serve remain burdened by socioeconomic hardship and face daily realities characterised by financial insecurity, exclusion from meaningful work, and poor access to quality health care. Women from resource-poor communities are screened for breast cancer less often than their more well-off sisters and frequently present with late-stage cancer. Reach for Recovery has a duty of care towards these women and utilises its multifaceted service offering to alleviate the burden for those struggling under numerous pressures.

Fundamental to our approach is our conviction that our survivor volunteers are the ideal people to provide empathic care. The recipients of our care are significantly more likely to flourish given the support and mentorship of a volunteer who has walked the cancer road. At Reach for Recovery, we create a virtuous circle when some of our service recipients return to do our volunteer training and go on to serve as dedicated and inspirational role models. We foster the leadership of our volunteers through meaningful opportunities, strengthen our branches through capacity-building initiatives, intentionally nurture emergent talent, and enhance our governing body by developing diverse skills. It is the quality of the people we attract that makes Reach for Recovery the prime organisation for mitigating the emotional and physical impact of breast cancer in South Africa.

Our volunteers are determined and hardworking. They receive support from an operational team that coordinates operations, finances, and social media. We take pride in our engaged governing body and its relentless efforts on behalf of Reach for Recovery. We are fiscally responsible while continually seeking innovative ways to engage with our stakeholders. Leading experts in cancer care co-present our training programmes packed with the latest information. We celebrate success and have frequent inspirational online and in-person gatherings for our volunteers. Reach for Recovery's reputation ensures that we have a waiting list of new volunteers wanting to be inducted every year, as well as a diverse range of external stakeholders eager to be part of our world.



United in hope, growing in impact

Dear friends and supporters,

"Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space. Invite one to stay." — Maya Angelou

Each year, we choose hope, inviting it to stay. This year, as Reach for Recovery, I am reminded once again of how powerful that decision becomes when we face it together. Across seven provinces, our 235 trained survivor volunteers, supported by our small but deeply committed operational team, have walked alongside thousands of women facing breast cancer. Whether in public or private hospitals, they have offered care that restores dignity, provides reassurance, and reminds every woman she is not alone.

For 58 years, our community of survivors has shown that hope isn't just a feeling, it's an action. It can be seen in hospital wards, where we supported around 6,500 women this year; through the Ditto Project, where a breast prosthesis restores confidence and a sense of wholeness; and in quiet conversations, where understanding gently replaces fear with courage. Our reach also extends beyond those living with cancer through Breast Health Awareness. In the past two years, we hosted 442 events nationwide, educating the public on early detection, dispelling myths, and reducing stigma. Watching women leave feeling informed, empowered, and hopeful is one of the quiet joys of our work.

This year, our impact continued to grow. Through the Power of Pink campaign, we worked tirelessly to keep pace with the rising demand for Ditto prostheses, a reminder of how many women still need our support. We strengthened partnerships with 178 medical professionals, expanded volunteer training and connection, and took meaningful steps toward extending our services to Mpumalanga. But the true measure of our work is found in moments that numbers cannot capture, the gentle smile of a woman who begins to hope again, the volunteer who gives her time and heart, the shared relief when fear gently yields to courage. Hope grows quietly, through listening, through care, through hands that reach out.

To every volunteer, donor, partner, and survivor who has stood beside us, thank you. Together, we remain united in hope and grow in impact, bringing light, confidence, and belonging to every woman we touch.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Stephné Jacobs

Chairperson, Reach for Recovery South Africa



Our reason for being

The emotional impact of breast cancer can significantly affect a woman's self-image and her role within her family, her workplace, and her community. Emotional distress and questions around "*who am I now that I've been diagnosed*" are common, leading to feelings of isolation, emotional anguish, and depression. Reach for Recovery's commitment to integrating emotional support alongside practical guidance provides a comprehensive approach to recovery, enabling individuals to thrive. Reach for Recovery is a beacon of hope, helping newly diagnosed women, and some men, make sense of the cancer experience.



Peer support

Our continuum of care reaches the full spectrum of affected people – shell-shocked newly diagnosed patients, those coming in for Ditto Project prosthetics fittings, and women looking for ongoing emotional and practical support. Our volunteers are always ready to provide warm human connection, accurate information, empathy, and hope. A distinctive aspect of our work is that our trained peer survivor volunteers provide in-person emotional and practical support to affected women. Globally, face-to-face support services to hospitalised women have become exceptionally rare. Reach for Recovery supports approximately 6,500 patients annually in South African hospitals and is the only affiliate of *Reach to Recovery International* that still visits patients in both public and private hospitals. Reach for Recovery's volunteers substantially enhance the mental and physical well-being of breast cancer patients in various ways. They provide invaluable emotional support through accurate information and shared experiences, fostering empathy and understanding. They serve as mentors, providing practical guidance on navigating treatment and managing side effects, offering comfort kits with handy post-operative items, and addressing daily challenges during and after cancer treatment.

Once the patient has been discharged, our volunteers use a digital means or home visits to extend the care. Our volunteers do not offer medical advice – instead, they focus on providing a compassionate connection, solidarity through shared life experiences, and practical guidance on how to thrive following a breast cancer diagnosis. We add further value by facilitating meetings where service users are educated on self-care and lifestyle adjustments. Volunteers and participants share their stories, instilling hope and motivation, and encouraging newcomers to remain engaged in their recovery journeys. These meetings foster a sense of community among participants, which is essential for enhancing social connections and crucial for maintaining mental health. Where necessary, we connect our beneficiaries to community resources.



Ditto Prosthesis Support Project

Physical appearance and dressing confidently contribute to confidence, emotional well-being and thriving after a breast cancer diagnosis. In the private sector, women pay up to R8,000 for a prosthetic breast. Through our flagship Ditto Project, we provide fully sponsored, highly sought-after silicone breast prostheses to women from low-income households who have undergone mastectomies in the public sector. The Ditto service is available in seven of our nine provinces, with plans to expand to Mpumalanga in the foreseeable future. This outstanding initiative is funded by the Power of Pink campaign, a social responsibility project of the South African Mushroom Growers Association. We are experiencing a rapidly growing demand for this service and have our hands full trying to keep up with the demand. The popularity and high demand of this service attest to the effectiveness of the Ditto Project in helping women regain their self-esteem and empowering them to walk tall in their communities and workplaces.

Whereas we serve all people touched by breast cancer irrespective of income, gender or culture, we are increasingly focusing our efforts on women from low-income backgrounds who depend on public health services and face daunting obstacles on the road to recovery. This is an ethical (doing what is right) and a duty of care (avoiding negligence) imperative, given the immense wealth and health disparities that exist in South Africa. Women facing economic hardship frequently lack the necessary resources for timely diagnosis and treatment, and this can result in delayed care and poorer health outcomes. Navigating the complex healthcare system can be particularly challenging for these women without the safety net that medical insurance provides, especially when follow-up care necessitates them travelling long distances, attending overburdened hospitals and clinics, or dealing with language barriers. Our razor-sharp focus on breast cancer enables us to have a deep understanding of the lived realities of our service users, and we respond with tailored services that are crucial for navigating the complexities of breast cancer.

ditto project



Breast Health Awareness

Our efforts are not limited to those living with cancer. We also play an essential role in educating the public about the importance of early detection and intervention. Our community education initiatives are vital for raising awareness about breast health, dispelling myths, and reducing stigma while also significantly impacting early detection efforts. Volunteers use referral pathways to ensure that those with warning signs of breast cancer are directed to appropriate services, thereby increasing good health outcomes. This proactive approach ultimately leads to improved health outcomes.



Woman-led & largely volunteer-driven



Reach for Recovery has established itself as South Africa's preferred service provider in the breast cancer field. The strong ties and collaborative culture between our volunteers, governing body, and operational team create a warm, supportive environment where everyone shares a deep understanding of the needs of our service users and the communities in which they reside. Together, we strive to offer compassionate support, education, and resources to those affected by breast cancer.

At the heart of Reach for Recovery is a workforce of dedicated volunteers deeply committed to delivering our services. We believe that the most heartfelt and impactful support comes from volunteers who have navigated similar challenges with breast cancer. Our breast cancer volunteers, many of whom are the embodiment of thrivers, serve as trained peer support volunteers and breast health educators. We are proud to have 236 volunteers organised into 23 groups in seven of our nine provinces, with elected regional and group chairpersons who help lead our efforts.



Reach for Recovery places a high value on quality training for its volunteers. Our carefully designed curriculum receives high praise from those who do our training. We have a waiting list of prospective volunteers interested in our annual online introductory course, co-presented by leading cancer experts and our own leadership. The foundation course guides trainees through a carefully designed curriculum, which includes group discussions, role-plays, simulation exercises, and breakout groups. The training and development of our volunteers never cease, and we invest substantial effort in continually improving the volunteer experience. In addition to the foundation course, our volunteers have access to regular webinars and mini-summits, which keep them informed about developments in the field of breast cancer. We pair training with volunteer recognition initiatives to boost morale, and we look forward to an in-person conference for volunteers in July 2025.



Over the past decade, Reach for Recovery has seen a deliberate diversification within its volunteer base, with a significant rise in the number of younger volunteers and women of colour joining our ranks. Our challenge remains to ensure that Reach for Recovery reflects the contemporary face of South Africa. This requires a determined effort to deliberately nurture and recruit a range of younger, working-class, and Black volunteers into leadership roles. By nurturing emergent leaders from all our communities and providing financial accommodations, such as transportation refunds and data coverage, we empower our volunteers and cultivate leaders for our future. Reach for Recovery is committed to systematically growing a representative leadership equipped to face the challenges of an unequal, multi-lingual, multi-cultural country.





Our governing body

Our governing body is composed of volunteers who oversee the governance of Reach for Recovery and ensure that we follow our mission, set coherent policies, ensure the financial health of our organisation, lead strategic planning and visioning for our future. The governing body is under the able leadership of our Chairperson, Stephné Jacobs, who serves with distinction, not only in South Africa but also as a board member of *Reach to Recovery International*. The governing body is composed of breast cancer survivors and independent members specialising in governance, financial oversight, sustainability, volunteer management, and marketing.

We have a small operational team, led by our National Manager, Stephanie van Deventer, who brings nearly 30 years of experience in the cancer field, primarily in a management roles. Stephanie is supported by Kayang Gagiano, our Communications and Media Manager, and Julia Myburgh, our National Bookkeeper, who is also a cancer survivor.



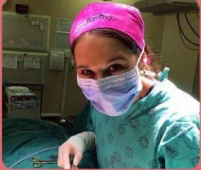


No organisation is an island

Reach for Recovery strives to prioritise the needs of women with breast cancer by shaping policy, strategy and services in conjunction with other stakeholders. Our rich ecosystem of strategic partnerships – including cancer organisations both domestically and abroad, healthcare providers, the business sector, and communities – creates an interwoven fabric of human connection for robust advocacy, support, and improved access for all people with breast cancer. Our involvement with *Reach to Recovery International*, the *Cancer Alliance*, and our contributions to national health policy demonstrate our commitment to addressing systemic issues in healthcare. Our Chairperson, Stephné Jacobs, plays a leading role in Reach to Recovery International and has a notable impact on cancer care both locally and internationally.

Reach for Recovery maintains strong working relationships with 178 breast cancer specialists who refer patients to us. Collaborations with local healthcare facilities have enabled community outreach events to educate the public on breast health, while partnerships have led to sponsored mammograms for women in need. We maintain strong partnerships with medical professionals for patient referrals and support, as well as with community organisations and businesses focused on breast health awareness and advocacy.

Financial support is broad-based and derived from cause-related marketing, grants, community fundraising, and donations. Community engagement is deepened through collaborations with schools, libraries, and local businesses. Reach for Recovery's volunteers represent a diverse demographic, embodying a spirit of altruism that strengthens the organisation's community connections. After 58 years, Reach for Recovery remains a crucial ally in the fight against breast cancer, with enduring community support underpinning its mission.

The infographic features a red background with a white bar at the top containing five categories: PURPOSE, PROTOCOL, PASSION PROJECT, PERFORMANCE, and PARTNERS. Below this, two white boxes display '134 PUBLIC & PRIVATE HOSPITALS' and '172+ REFERRING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS'. To the right are three images: a healthcare professional in a pink cap and mask, a person at a computer, and a group of healthcare professionals in a clinical setting. A list of bullet points is positioned below the images, and the 'reach for recovery' logo is in the bottom right corner.

PURPOSE	PROTOCOL	PASSION PROJECT	PERFORMANCE	PARTNERS
134 PUBLIC & PRIVATE HOSPITALS	172+ REFERRING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively involved in various organisations• Strong support from healthcare professionals• Establishing services in new areas• Ongoing efforts to promote awareness and increase accessibility				

reach for recovery
breast cancer support



Our donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our generous donors and partners who have supported Reach for Recovery this year. Your commitment and kindness have made a profound difference in the lives of those affected by breast cancer. We are especially grateful to those who contributed R1,000 or more, whose generous support has enabled us to expand our programs and provide essential support and hope to many. Your partnership is invaluable, and together, we are making strides toward a world where every woman facing breast cancer feels supported, empowered, and hopeful. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and compassion.



Reddam ASB Parents
Icon Oncology Cape Town
Personal Trust
Slipstream Consulting
NMJ Liebenberg
Paarl Provincial Hospital Radiology
The Stretch Foundation
Top Carpets & Floor
Lake Smit & Partners
KZN Slots
Isle Weldhagen
Queenswood Checkers
R Venter
Brooklyn Mall
M Mafico
Lily Meyer & Friends
V Coller
CBOC Bowls Club
Franskraal Bowls Club

Spar Ladies Race, Gauteng
Advtech
David Tsabatznik Trust
Victor Daitz Foundation
Rand Aid
Dismore
Chapman Brothers
SA Caravan Association, Uitenhage
Roselane Womens Association
Dr van Heerden
Methodist Church Uitenhage
Precious Gems Foundation
Nussbaum Foundation
Roche
South African Mushroom Farmers Association
Cape Mushrooms
Pick n Pay
Global Breast Cancer Council
Calendar Girls

Picketwood CC
Punch for Pink
Pinehaven Hospital
Olivedale Retirement Village
B to Z Dance Fitness
Alma Mater School
Pick n Pay Noordheuwel
Krugersdorp Provincial Hospital
Spies & Associates, Bloemfontein
Drs Van Dyk Incorporated

A heartfelt thank you to our Graphic Design Partners for sharing your talent and creativity all year long. Your generosity helps us shine and brings our mission to life in every design. Megan Perks at Better Best Agency
Lorey Lourens
Marianne Marais



Empowering & engaging communities:

Our social media impact

Throughout 2024 and into 2025, our Facebook and Instagram platforms have continued to serve as vital channels for raising awareness, providing support, and fostering a strong community among breast cancer survivors. Our content has consistently highlighted themes of empowerment, community engagement, and education, significantly contributing to ongoing visibility of our mission.

Activity levels on our social media pages have remained steady, with a moderate but meaningful level of audience interaction. The majority of engagement—approximately 80%—originates from our dedicated volunteers, while organic traffic and external supporters account for around 20–25%. Engagement tends to peak during October, coinciding with multiple activations and fundraising initiatives in collaboration with individuals, businesses, and organisations.

Key Achievements & Highlights

- During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October 2025, targeted awareness campaigns successfully boosted follower counts and increased engagement levels.
- Content featuring survivor stories and volunteer highlights continues to resonate deeply, particularly posts updating followers on regional volunteer activities.
- Strategic collaborations with hospitals, businesses, and NGOs have significantly enhanced our visibility. Notable campaigns include the annual Power of Pink Campaign in partnership with SAMFA and the Euphoria Telecom initiative, both of which expanded our digital outreach.

Our social media channels have experienced consistent organic growth, averaging an annual increase of 5–10%. This growth has been primarily driven by campaign-driven spikes, particularly during October's awareness activities. On average, our monthly organic reach ranges between 10,000 and 20,000 users, with peak reach typically occurring during campaign periods or when sponsored content is promoted.

Overall, the sentiment across our social media platforms remains overwhelmingly positive. Messages of hope, gratitude, and empowerment are prevalent, with comments frequently expressing appreciation for survivor stories and the emotional support our content provides.



Noteworthy achievements during the year



Reach for Recovery proudly marked 57 years of providing free support services to breast cancer patients, their families, and communities. These invaluable services are lovingly delivered by dedicated, passionate, and loyal breast cancer survivor volunteers who radiate courage and compassion. Their unwavering commitment offers hope and solidarity to fellow patients, inspiring resilience on their journeys. We look forward to continuing this vital work for many more years.



We proudly established three new satellite groups, expanding our reach and support for breast cancer patients across South Africa. We increased our footprint in three key provinces: the West Coast in the Western Cape, Upington in the Northern Cape, and BelaBela and Polokwane in Limpopo. These new offices will provide invaluable support services, raise awareness about early detection, and promote timely treatment of breast cancer in these communities. Our efforts continue to foster hope and improve outcomes for many women and their families.



During October Breast Cancer Awareness Month, our dedicated volunteers and supporters made a remarkable impact across South Africa by organising 222 awareness events. Despite their busy personal and professional lives, these volunteers tirelessly worked to share the crucial message of early detection for successful treatment. We proudly acknowledge their selfless dedication and commitment to saving lives. Participation from diverse settings—ranging from taxi ranks and sporting events to shopping malls—greatly expanded our reach, ensuring that this vital message resonated far and wide throughout the nation.

Noteworthy achievements during the year



We are profoundly grateful for the support and recognition we have received from 172 healthcare professionals and 132 medical facilities across South Africa. Their trust highlights the invaluable role our trained peer support volunteers play in providing emotional and psychological assistance to patients referred by them. Our commitment is to expand these numbers in the coming year, ensuring that no breast cancer patient misses out on the crucial support from a survivor who understands their journey firsthand. Together, we are making strides toward a future where every patient feels supported and empowered.



This year, we were proud to offer a significant opportunity for engagement at the 12th BIGOSA (Breast Interest Group of Southern Africa) conference, held from September 6-7 at the beautiful Vineyard Hotel in Cape Town. Our RFR initiative provided a platform to connect with medical professionals, share information about our support services, and promote the vital role of survivor volunteers. These dedicated volunteers, having personally navigated the breast cancer journey, are uniquely equipped to offer compassionate, peer-based support to newly diagnosed patients. The event was a tremendous success, fostering awareness and encouraging healthcare providers to recommend our free services to those in need, ultimately strengthening our impact across the community.



On Saturday, November 23, 2024, Reach to Recovery International (RRI) hosted a virtual webinar titled "Finding Hope and Building Resilience Following a Breast Cancer Diagnosis." The session was highly attended, featuring participants from 14 countries, including current volunteers at RFR in South Africa. The event concluded with a compelling presentation by Stephné Jacobs, a survivor, RFR board chairperson, and RRI director, titled "Rising like a Lotus – A Path to Resilience." Her address resonated strongly with the audience, showcasing her inspiring journey and highlighting the importance of hope and resilience. The event was a proud moment of international representation and impactful dialogue.

Noteworthy achievements during the year



Reach for Recovery South Africa also made significant strides in empowering survivors and sharing their stories on an international stage through the RRI e-newsletter, Bloom. Featuring on the cover and contributing articles highlight the organisation's impactful work and dedication. This recognition not only celebrates past accomplishments but also helps inspire continued resilience and empowerment among survivors worldwide.



We are immensely proud to share that one of our inspiring leader volunteers, Nirri Moethilalh from Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, was nominated and subsequently crowned as one of Influential Magazine's 30 Changemakers and Female Leaders in South Africa. Nirri's dedication and impactful work have genuinely made a difference in the communities she serves. Her recognition as a shining light for Reach for Recovery highlights her unwavering commitment to creating positive change. We celebrate her achievement and are grateful for her leadership and passion.

Our impact at a glance

PEER SUPPORT MEANS WE UNDERSTAND



reach4recovery.org.za

236
Active
Volunteers



3057
Hospital Visits



718
Other Contact



5889
Patients
Supported



2828
Cushions




1070
Ditto
Prostheses



2114
Clinic
Visits



2857
Care
Bags



1959
Softies



A final glance

In South Africa, far too many women from low-income communities present with late-stage breast cancer. Reach For Recovery has a duty of care towards these women and leaves no stone unturned in promoting early diagnosis and treatment through educational initiatives, followed by practical and emotional support once a woman has been diagnosed. We do not accept that substandard care should be the destiny of women from low-income backgrounds, and we are determined to change this narrative. At Reach for Recovery, we hold a profound belief that all women with breast cancer are invaluable resources for their families, workplaces and communities. We recognise that affected women need support to maintain a strong sense of worth in the face of an illness that is notorious for undermining confidence. We know that we can be survivors and thrivers.

Reach for Recovery's dedication to collaboration, specialised support, survivor involvement, and advocacy benefits affected people, their loved ones, workplaces, and the communities where we are active. We have remained steadfast since 1967, and the last decade has seen strides in the professionalisation of our organisation, as well as significant growth in our reach and impact.

Reach for Recovery has a well-established monitoring system and has an excellent track record of making speedy course corrections when needed. Increased investment in digital tools and platforms is expanding our work with volunteers, partners, and support groups, while also boosting our fundraising efforts. This, in turn, ensures broader access to our services and raises our visibility. We will continue to prioritise programme evaluation and data collection to measure impact and improve service delivery. We do our utmost to ensure that our fundraising programme has a broad base capable of sustaining crucial services.

Our dream is to expand into the unserved provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo, continually improving our health initiatives and community outreach, strengthening our small operational team, enriching training programmes for volunteers and the governing body, and translating training materials into local languages.



How to get in touch with us

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POPIA compliant



Credits:
Stephné Jacobs (Chairperson), Stephanie van Deventer (National Manager), Kayang Gagiano (Social Media Manager), and Erna Prinsloo (Member of the Board of Management) collaborated on the writing of this report. We used Grammarly PRO as an editing assistant. Graphic design by Megan Perks, Better Best Agency

The Reach for Recovery Financial Statements for 2024/25 are available on request.

