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### 15 years of service

- Gender on the local government agenda advanced through 50 Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government. Fifty of the 75 local authorities in Lesotho (67%) are COEs actively advancing gender equality, women's rights and working towards empowering women and ending violence.
- 917 484 citizens, about 50% of the population were reached through 50 Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local government.
- Gender on the media agenda through 9 Centres of Excellence for Gender in the Media.
- GBV Baseline study conducted, completed and report launched.
- A National Action Plan to End Gender Violence drafted.
- **Key partners:** Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR), Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Women in Law Southern Africa(WLSA), EU, UNFPA, UNDP, Irish Aid, Lesotho Council of NGOs.

Gender Links Lesotho registered as a local NGO in February 2011. The office has established partnerships with:

- **Government Ministries:** The core ministries that GL Lesotho works with are the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR) and the Ministry of Local Government. Both Ministries have been involved in both the COE and the Entrepreneurship programmes. GL has successfully drawn up gender action plans with 50 local government councils, through an MOU with the MGYSR that is implemented through the Principal District Gender Officers (PDGOs); who co-facilitate the roll out of the COE process in all 10 districts of the country. GL Lesotho has trained district gender officers and council gender focal persons to assist in rolling out the COE's to all the 75 councils of Lesotho.
- **Civil Society organisations and faith based organisations:** GL Lesotho is a registered member of the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (LCN). Through its annual national summit GL Lesotho brings together all these organisations to show case their work that is alligned to the SADC Protocol.
- **Alliance networks:** GL Lesotho works closely with the focal alliance network in Lesotho represented by Women in Law in Southern Africa (WLSA).
- **Local Councils:** GL Lesotho has so far worked with 50 COE local councils in implementing the COE programme. These councils have developed gender action plans that include a comprehensive local GBV action plan.

### Key achievements

**Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government:** 50 councils have adopted gender action plan and are implementing them. These cover a population of 917 484; approximately half the population of 1,800 000. The COEs include the capital city, Maseru. COEs cover 10 Urban

councils and 40 rural councils in all ten districts of the country. The gender score of councils that form part of the COE, measured through the annual Gender in Local Government Score Card, has increased from 44% in 2012 to 63% in 2015, a 19 percentage point increase. Councils are now contributing an equivalent of M 600,000 annually into gender work as a result of the COE work.

**Violence Against Women Baseline Study:** GL Lesotho successfully launched the first comprehensive Violence Against Women Baseline Study, conducted by Gender Links working with the Ministry of Gender and the Bureau of Statistics. In 2015 Gender Links Lesotho launched the Gender Based Violence Indicators study report. This study commenced in 2013 with the assistance of the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation and Bureau of Statistics. The report was launched by the Principal Secretary from the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Dr Majara Jonathan Molapo. In attendance were 40 people comprising representatives from the Ministry of Gender, representatives from Lesotho Bureau of Statistics (BOS), civil society organisations, representatives from development partners and the media.

The study revealed that about 86% of women in Lesotho have experienced some form of violence at least once in their lifetime and 41% men admit to having perpetrated GBV. This percentage is very high in a country that is signatory to and has ratified the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development adopted by Heads of State in August 2008. The protocol has specific targets for ending GBV by 2030. 2015 has come and pass but the levels of GBV in Lesotho are so high they are nowhere close to being reduced even by half.

GL followed the launch of the report was then followed by a two and half day intensive workshop to review the **National Action Plan to end GBV (NAP)** and to develop a national strategic communication plan. The review of the NAP is very important for Lesotho to reduce these high levels of GBV craft an integral strategy for localising and ending GBV.

**Ending violence, empowering women:** GL Lesotho completed the pilot phase of the entrepreneurship training for survivors of gender violence linked to the gender action plans of Councils. The project was completed and evaluated. This next phase of the COE process seeks to strengthen the achievement gained in councils in promoting gender equality, mainstreaming, empowering women and ending violence.

The impacts in the lives of individuals include increased self-worth and assertiveness and increase in leadership skills especially through presentations in summits. The people who attended summits reported improvement in their leadership skills, improvement in communication and presentation skills, peer learning and networking, and gaining more knowledge on the SADC Gender Protocol. These changes are in line with the overall expectation that working with councils will ensure that gender mainstreaming is entrenched in, and enhances service delivery.

Lesotho has hosted to two successful District level Summits. Thirty six (36) of the fifty (50) councils that formed part of the COE process in 2015 became part of these two DLS, with 10 urban councils and 26 rural councils. Eight of those councils proceeded to the National summit and two of them represented the country at the regional summit.

#### Protocol@Work Summit facts

- 120 participants - 77 Female, 43 male.
- 76 entries - 55 women and 21 men, from 10 categories.
- 5 males and 11 women runners up.
- 11 female and 6 male winners.
- 31 organisations represented.
- 8 councils represented.
- 2 faith based organisations represented.
- 9 media houses represented.
- 2 government ministries represented.
- 0 members of parliament represented.
- 2 donors represented.

The national Gender Justice and Local Government Summits received seventy six (76) entries. These entries were called in from all the ten districts of the country, from local to national levels. These covered good practices from different categories, Local government COEs, Economic Justice and Education, SRH and HIV and AIDS, Gender Based Violence, Climate Change, Leadership, Gender Champion, FBO, 50/50, Media COE, Media - Print, Media - TV, Media - Radio.

130 women have completed the three phased life skills and entrepreneurship programme in ten councils. Twenty shared

their business plans at the 2015 Lesotho National summit in June 2015.

#### Key challenges

- There is no MOU between GL and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship and this often hampers the COE roll out and strengthening especially where there is need for Central Government to intervene.
- Councils do not have budgets dedicated for gender activities, the Ministry dictates council budgets, and therefore progress to mainstream gender into their activities becomes slow.
- The Ministry of Communication has not been able to move despite all efforts because of political challenges that continue to affect the highest authority in the Ministry (Ministers office and Principal Secretary's office) that is expected to sign the Memorandum of Understanding and give a go ahead to the implementation of the media project.
- Many of the media houses (particularly newspapers) are very busy with their work that they often give little time and poor commitment to the COE initiative.
- The lack of commitment and poor post training support from many councils with the entrepreneurship programme was very disappointing as councils are expected to link the programme to local economic development.

#### Key priorities for 2016

- **Advancing the 50/50 Campaign in the face of 2016 local elections** - With the local government elections coming up in 2016, GL Lesotho will conduct 50/50 campaigns to ensure that women get represented.
- **Women in Local Government** - GL Lesotho will convene a meeting with all localities so that best practices can be shared for strengthening the implementation of Gender Action Plan and Gender Based Violence Action Plans leading to concrete projects for the 2016 Summit and beyond.
- **Local Action to end GBV through cascading the entrepreneurship project** - The next phase of the COE process is to work in 50 councils of Lesotho that involves the full COE process with Gender Action Plans and GBV action plans to develop comprehensive and costed actions to end GBV through specific Local Economic Development projects. Documented evidence of change such as personal accounts "I" stories, will form part of the monitoring exercise. The programme will make linkages to microfinance institutions and business opportunities. The Ministry of Gender is intending to partner with GL to take the process forward.
- **GBV indicators** - The National Action Plan to End GBV will be used to draw local GBV plans for the councils. The findings of the study will help councils and policy makers develop tangible interventions on reducing GBV.

