

Innovation, Knowledge and Learning

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Knowledge is GL's password: Governance Manager Mariatu Fonnah during GL's 2015 planning meeting.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Since making the transition from M and E to Results for Change which brings together M and E, knowledge, learning, innovation, and value for money, Gender Links (GL) has invested greatly in developing innovative systems and tools for data collection and analysis.

Over the years GL has developed a number of online platforms to capture data gathered in the countries it works in. During 2015 GL focused on finding more efficient ways of creating online forms to gather data. GL required customisable, low cost options for this. This resulted in the discovery of Survey Gizmo, a

cost effective online software tested on a number of projects and found to work well as a data gathering tool. It also allows for data to be extracted into report or excel sheets for further analysis. Besides the major Value for Money financial gain, this tool also allowed GL to internalise its ability to create, manage, and administrate its surveys. The software has also enabled GL Services to create customer-specific surveys quickly. As an example below is the one created for the African Development Bank, which included a French version of the Organisational Gender Score Card survey.

Select another language




AFDB ORGANISATIONAL GENDER SCORE CARD

1. Date

2. Name*

3. Surname*

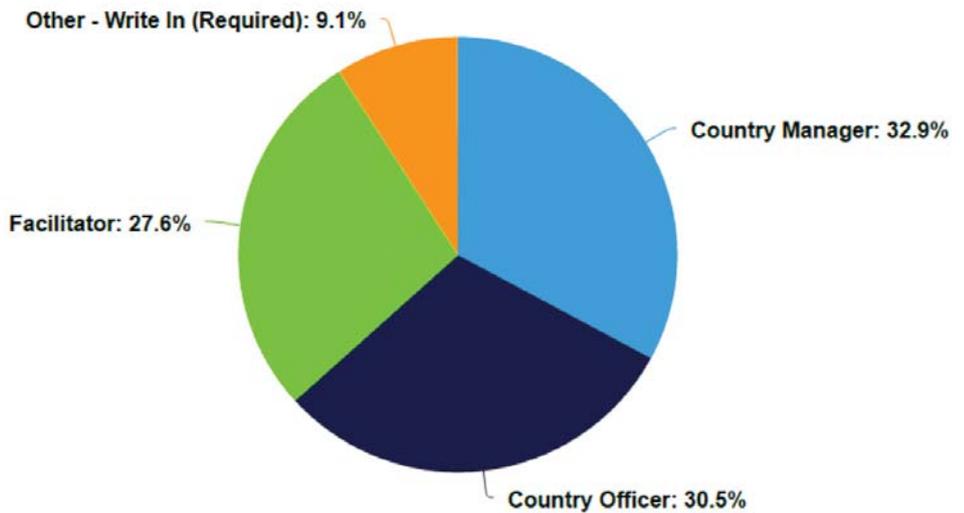
Survey Gizmo software also allows us to create customised reports on the data collected and to share this with others in different online and offline versions.



Overall Results - Segment Report

- Summary
- Individual Responses

1. Designation



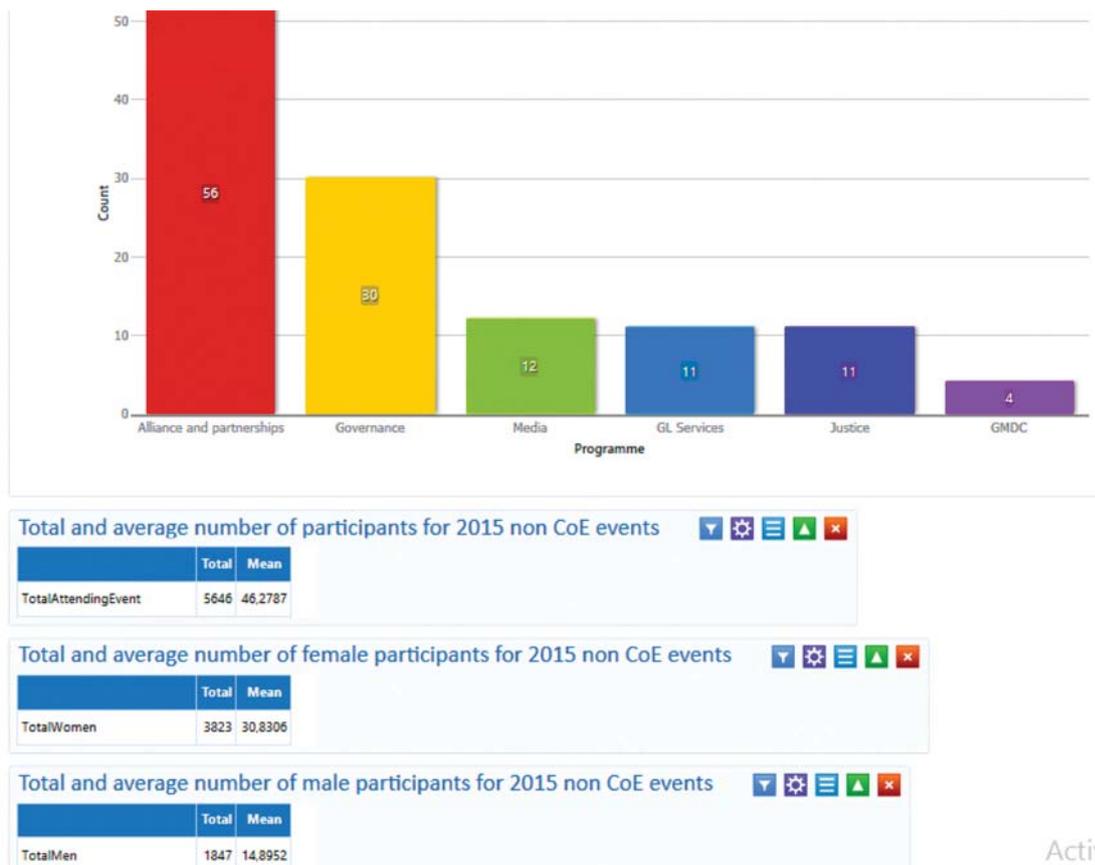
Some online surveys have been created for internal purposes and are not accessible by the public. These serve an important project tracking and research data collection function. These included the Gender Empowerment Index (GEI), the Assessment of Council

Support, and the Supplementary GEI which were used to assess the impact of our entrepreneurship development project with women survivors of GBV. By gathering the GEI at the beginning and at the end of the project GL has been able to assess its impact.

GL has also expanded its support to other organisations through exploring the degree to which they are gender sensitive. The Organisational Scorecard was developed as a way for staff from these organisations to rate themselves and the organisation in relation to gender and has proved to be a useful starting point in exploring this issue with organisations. The Organisational Scorecard is also available on the GL website and produces a number of reports on the data collected.

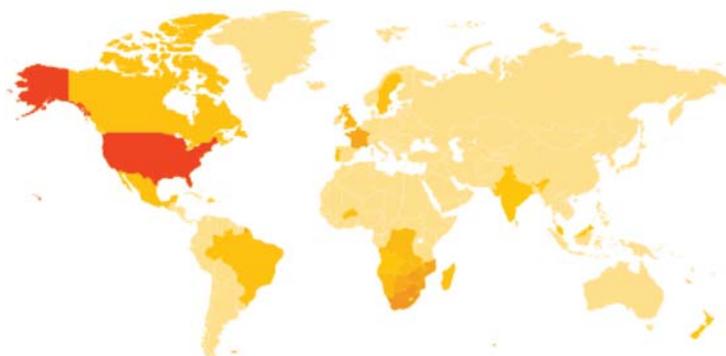
GL continues to improve on the way it gathers data regarding programme work, through the development

of a new system using Epi Info. This has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of monitoring and tracking implementation. As an example, the work GL does with over 400 councils in ten countries is tracked on Epi where each council has a record where data about it and all events or workshops conducted with them are captured. An exciting part of using Epi Info is the ability to create customised reports based on information captured on the system. Over 100 reports have been created that look at the different data at different levels, from overview to country-specific (image below).



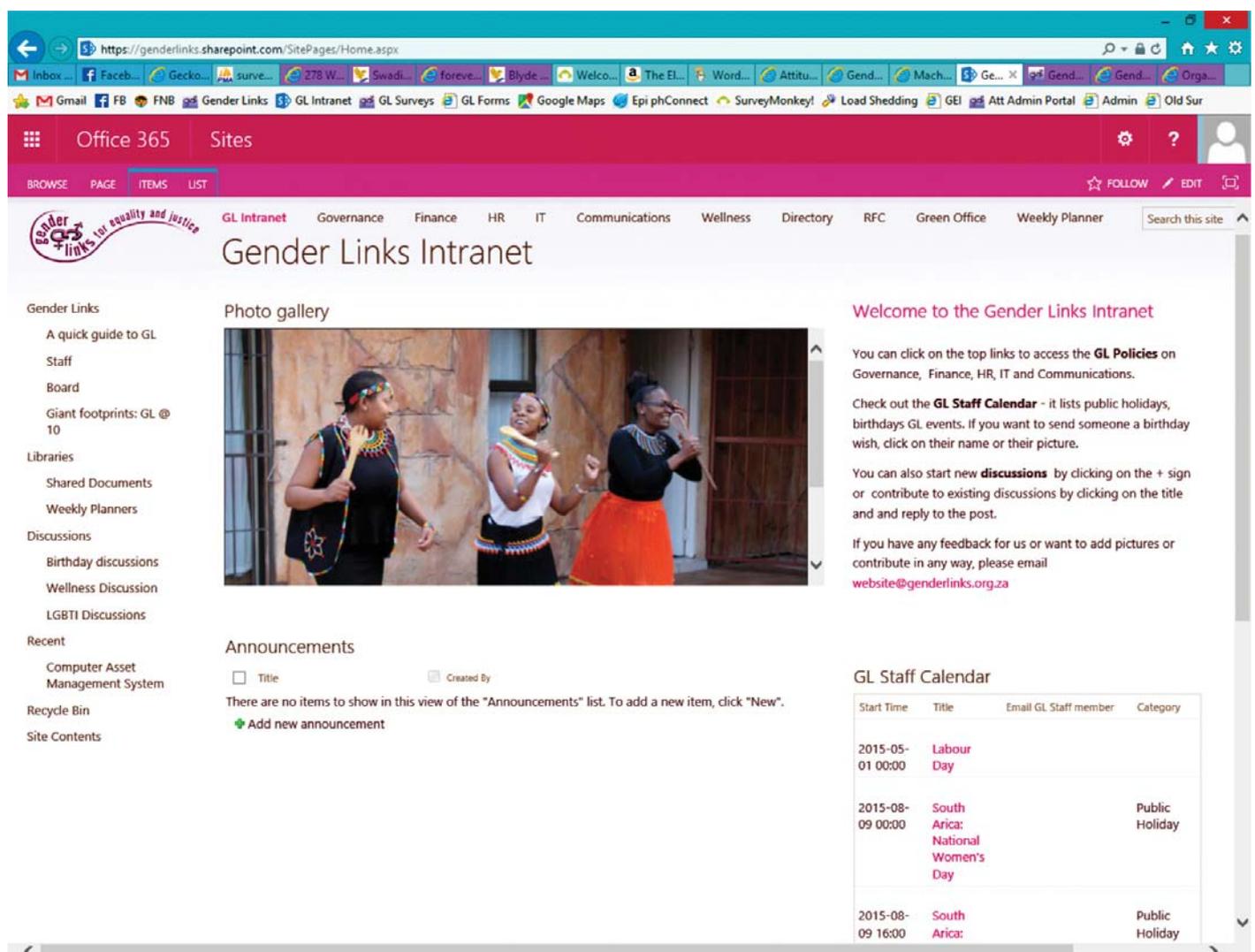
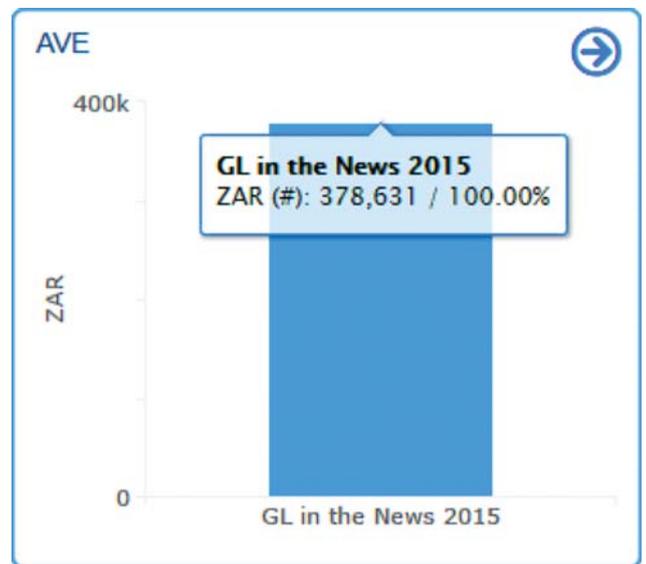
Heat Map

It is important for GL to monitor the extent to which its work reaches people. This is referred to as outreach and much of this involves monitoring the extent to which GL is mentioned in the media. GL has obtained detailed information of its online footprint through a service called Meltwater News. The graph illustrates the information GL is able to obtain regarding where it appears online.



Additional information such as how much it would have cost GL to buy the space it got in these publications is also now available. For 2015, GL managed to get online news space that would have cost the organisation ZAR 378,631.00.

In 2015, GL expanded its use of SharePoint as a communal workspace. It is now common for documents to be placed online for editing or updating. This has decreased the amount of time taken to integrate comments or changes from several people. Given that the organisation works across 10 different countries, this kind of platform is vital to our work.



Knowledge

GL is a learning organisation that produces major research every year (such as 15 country and a regional Barometer on progress towards achieving the targets

of the SADC Gender Protocol). The table overleaf illustrates the ways in which GL collects qualitative and quantitative data for learning purposes.

Learning level	Quantitative	Qualitative	Tools
Output	Number of events Number of participants By country, sex, and programme	Participant feedback	Epi Info
Outreach	Website Facebook Twitter Media statistics	Media articles mentioning GL Use of GL publications Drivers of Change	Meltwater Google Analytics Google Scholar
Outcome	Gender Attitude Survey Gender Score Cards for media and local government Partners feedback survey Value for Money data	"I" Stories or first-hand accounts Testimonial accounts	Online surveys Survey Gizmo
Impact	Citizens Scorecard SADC Gender and Development Index (SGDI)	SADC Protocol at work case studies	Online surveys

Researchers are becoming increasingly reliant on the use of search engines to identify published material within their area of interest. In many cases this identified material is used to inform their own research and is included in their references. With the increasing use of electronic publishing, it has become relatively easy to identify the number of times an article has been cited or the number of times material on the internet has been "opened" by using search engines.

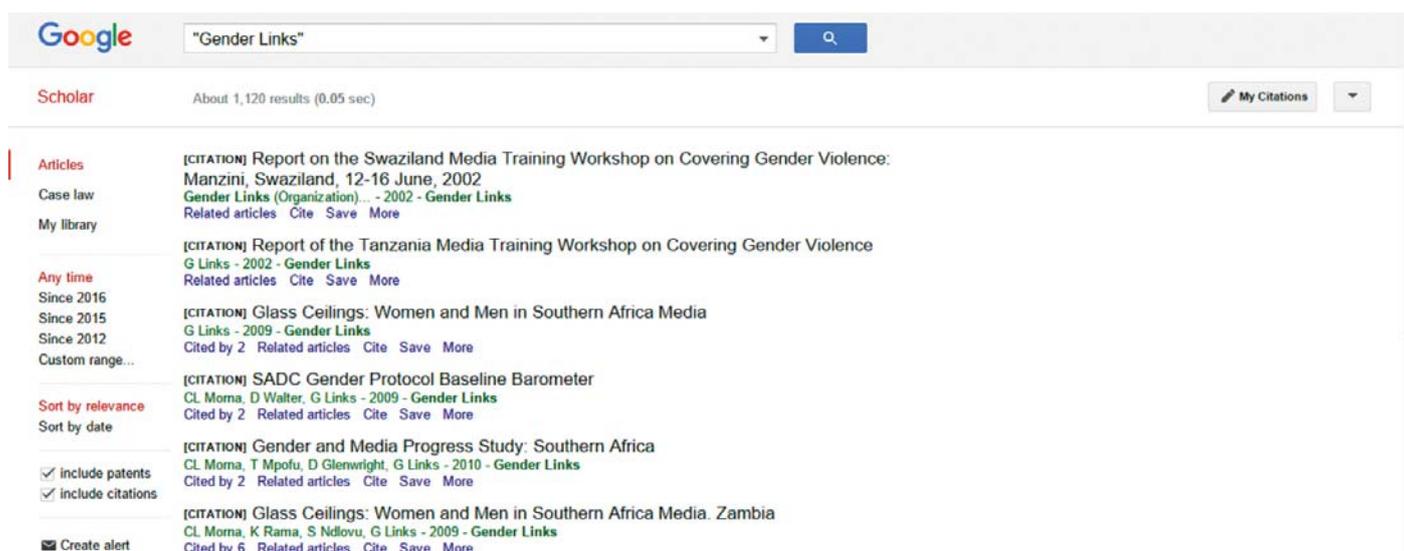
Whilst GL cannot pre-determine the way individuals use search engines, improved meta-tagging of documents on the Gender Links web site will facilitate access to our important resources and ensure that the knowledge retained by Gender Links is effectively used. This will be supplemented by the growth of our database of universities and key opinion formers in the relevant academic fields and regular targeted information on new and existing resources using e-

newsletters/blogs and social media. It will also be necessary to look beyond Google Scholar to ensure that the increasing numbers of academic search engines are used in such a way that Gender Links material is easily found.

The exponential increase in the use of search engines by academics, researchers and activists has been paralleled by the electronic publishing of Gender Links material. This enables us to have a unique insight into whether Gender Links is a relevant reference point on gender not only in the SADC region, but internationally.

Findings

In 2013 a simple search on Google Scholar for "Gender Links" yielded just over 700 results. In 2016 the same search yielded over 1,100 results, a 57% increase.



GL has previously acknowledged that this type of search is largely anecdotal. However, it is a good indication of how those who are using search engines, such as Google Scholar, recognise the importance

of the research undertaken by Gender Links. All of the top "hits" are for citations relating to academic work undertaken by GL.

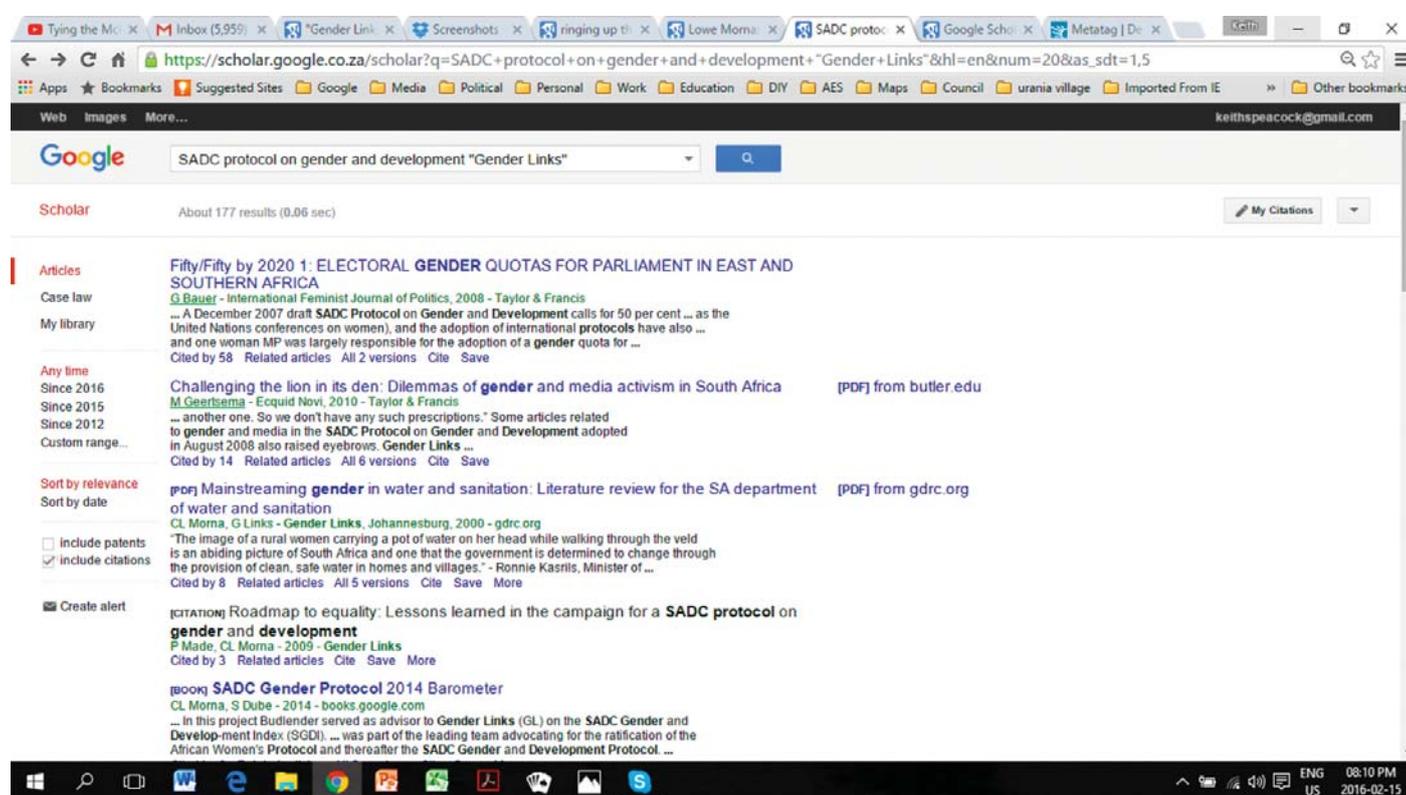
A different search for “Gender Links” using the main Google engine, more commonly used by non-academics, yielded over one hundred million results. While some of these might be quite tangential, all of the first two pages relate directly to the work of Gender Links. This shows that the HTML tagging on GL's various platforms ensures that a direct request by the end user will be able to identify and access the correct site and, by definition, review the correct materials.

It is not only recent material that is cited in academic publications. As Gender Links moves towards its 15th birthday, “Ringing the Changes”, first published in 2004, has, in 2016, been cited in thirty eight publications. Fifteen of these were in the last three years, which shows the continued relevancy of Gender

Links' early documents and how they have become critical reference points in any gender dialogue.

A Google Scholar search for “SADC Barometer” returns six of the top eight hits as Gender Links publications, whilst a search for “SADC Protocol on Gender and Development” returns Gender Links material in the top five most viewed materials. The first page of 'hits' are documents almost exclusively authored by Gender Links, which gives a sense of the level of research output of the organisation.

When this search of “SADC Protocol on Gender Development” is extended to include “Gender Links”, it is not surprising that the search results are almost exclusively produced by Gender Links. However, this search does clearly show the depth and scope of the material produced across a significant sample of the countries in SADC.



There is little doubt that Gender Links is generating quality research, which is being taken seriously and recognised in the academic community. Gender Links publications have been cited 200 times since inception. There has been a progressive, if uneven, annual increase in citations especially in the last three years.

It is also important to note the importance of the “multiplier effect” of being cited in publications, as this impact is often unrecognised. Any publication that cites Gender Links material is in turn read and cited in other publications, often without reference to the original source materials. This multiplier effect, whilst not statistically quantifiable, means the impact of the original research is far greater than the number of direct citations seems to indicate.

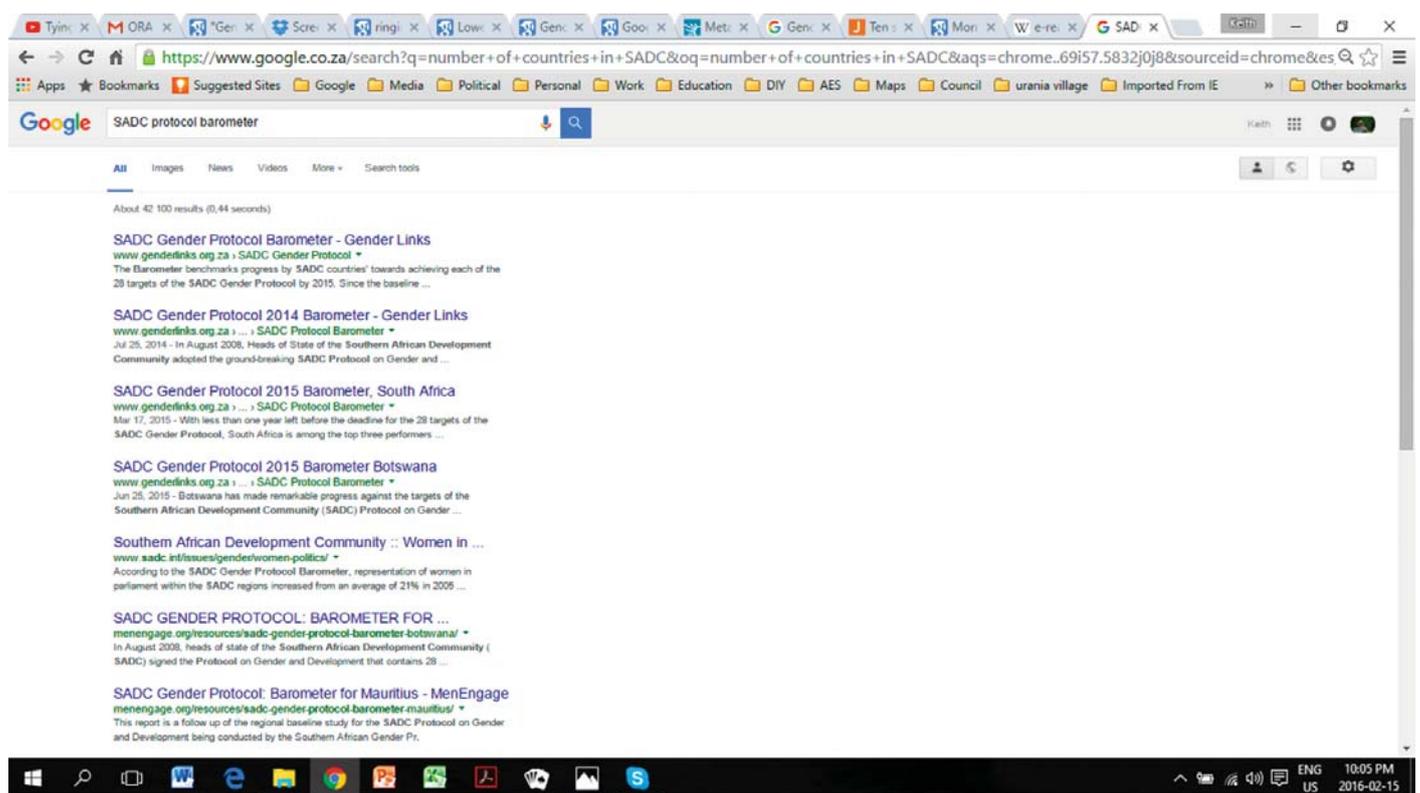
Whilst citations are important within the academic environment, especially those that have been peer reviewed, often policy documents do not use a citation methodology to acknowledge research. This is a challenge in assessing the impact of the research of Gender Links and other organisations. It has previously been noted that Gender Links research and methodology has had a significant impact on policy formation and implementation. For example, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime uses the Barometer in its own research. Civil society organisations in India model their citizen monitoring mechanism on the Barometer and local government centres of excellence have been formed in Fiji. The ability to identify this type of impact from initial ground breaking work by Gender Links is difficult. More research is needed to ensure that we can identify the value chains and the retention of this information as an integral part of Gender Links knowledge management.

The number of publications that are citing Gender Links documents is not always a good indicator of

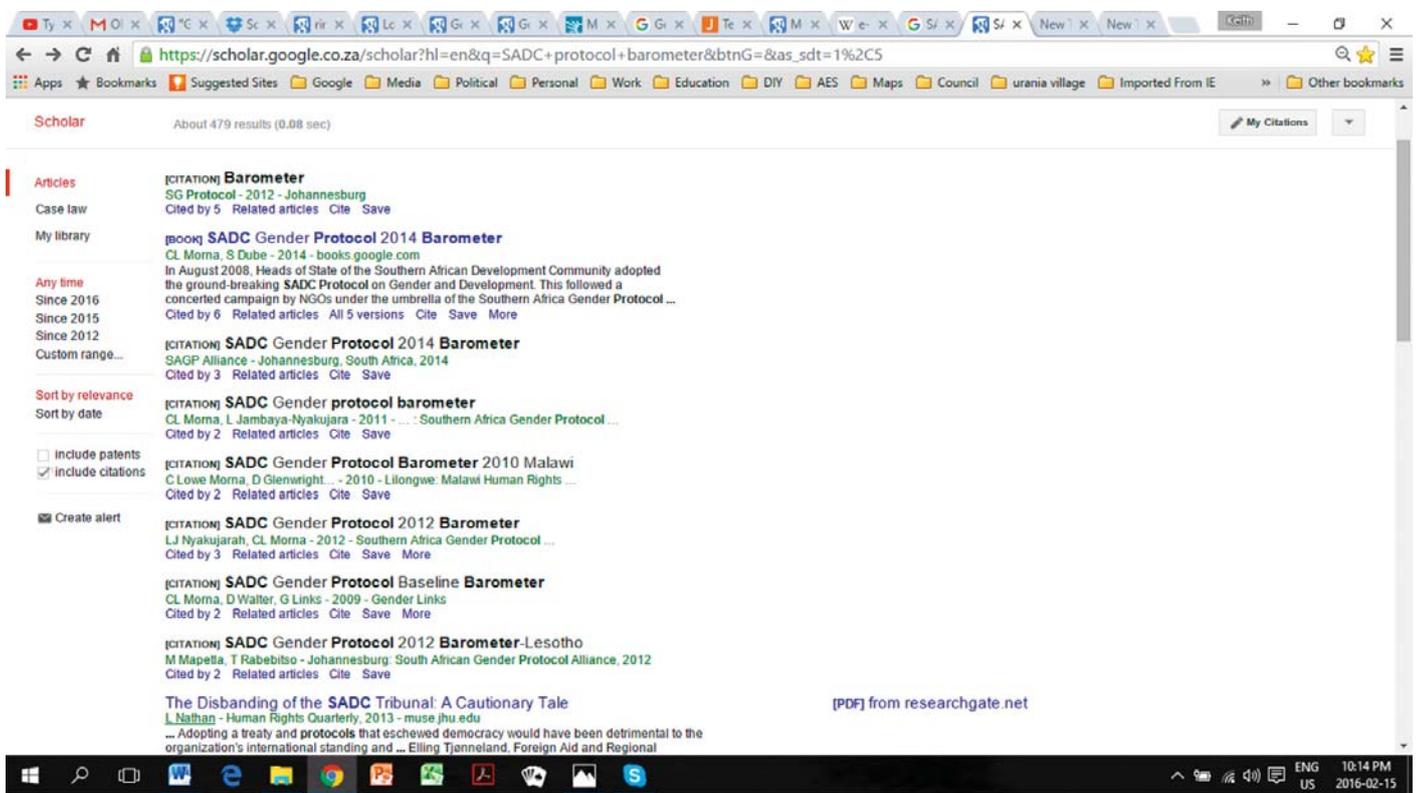
the quality of these publications and their impact on future research and policy. Further evaluation of the impact that Gender Links materials have had in this critical area is needed.

The four most cited documents shown under Google Scholar are presently, *“Ringing up the Changes: Gender in Southern African Politics”*; *“The war at home: Gender based violence indicators project”*; *“Gauteng Research Report. Johannesburg, South Africa”*; and *“Whose News? Whose Views? Southern African Gender in Media Handbook.”* This is a reflection of the diversity of Gender Links work.

The annual SADC Gender Protocol Barometer appears to have not previously been easily accessible by search engines as there are few citations. The 2014 Barometer, however, has been cited six times under Google Scholar. However, a general search in Google under “SADC Gender Protocol Barometer” results in 42,000 results with Gender Links dominating the first pages with the highest number of hits.



A search in Google Scholar for “SADC Gender Protocol Barometer” gives 479 results, again dominated by Gender Links publications. Ironically, the citations for this publication are not included in the overall citations for Gender Links publications (see above), because of the nature of its classification.



The material produced by Gender Links is diverse and not necessarily specifically targeted at an academic audience given that a significant part of our work is within the communities we serve. In the future Gender Links is increasing its focus on knowledge management and how the organisational knowledge developed over the fifteen years of Gender Links life can be rationally stored, easily retrieved and disseminated to an ever widening audience who

can in turn be empowered to effectively use that knowledge to make a real impact.

Learning

An important part of learning for GL is how we learn from others. The table below maps the other Learning Partnerships that GL belongs to and how these enhance sustainability.

Learning groups	Brief description	Formal mechanisms	Informal mechanisms	Effects and contribution to sustainability
PPA Gender Working Group	Global PPA partners.	Periodic meetings.	Regular E Mail exchanges.	GL has improved and refined its Theory of Change.
DFID SA	Local DFID office	GL invited to run a “teach in” on the new Gender Equality Act for International Development.	Frequent exchange of E Mails on DFID and GL priorities, especially on VAW.	GL is well networked with DFID in the host office and country operations, where it is also eligible to apply for funds.
The Alliance Network	Network of 15 country and ten theme clusters that champion the SGP.	Lobbying, research, media and advocacy training linked to annual meetings.	Frequent alerts sent by members, eg a controversial provision in the rape law in Mozambique.	Ownership by members of the network has been enhanced (see Part One, Section 6, Beneficiary Feedback); networks now raising their own funds.
Media and Local Government COEs	400 institutions that GL works with on gender mainstreaming.	Annual verification and “ <i>Learning through Listening</i> ” papers.	Study visits and exchanges.	45% increase in COE fund raising and allocations for gender work in 2012/2013.
The Gender and Media Diversity Centre	Media development and training institutions	Biannual meetings, monthly seminars, online journal.	Alerts on gender stereotypes in the media.	Dynamic learning and sharing centre linked to the global Gender and Media Alliance led by UNESCO that will sustain momentum on gender and media work.
Institutional	GL staff, associates and Board.	Annual <i>Learning Journey</i> - reflection by all staff.	Monthly “brown bag” lunches on various topics.	These sessions provide a well of ideas and inspiration for GL work.

COE councils have initiated several exchanges that are adding vitality to gender responsive local governance such as the study visit from Zimbabwe to Mauritius. Grand Port, the council that won the summit prize for best COE last year hosted a study visit for all councils in Mauritius. The University of Limpopo arranged a study visit for its students to GL.

The Southern African Learning Partnership (SALP) that GL coordinates has prioritised peer review as an action area this year. SALP aims at creating spaces and opportunity for sharing among organisations based in Southern Africa. The first step GL took was

to do an online survey with the organisations involved in SALP to determine if they valued being part of SALP, if they would like to continue to participate in SALP and how, and to identify the themes they would like to focus on as a Learning Partnership. SALP organisations were interested in a number of topics, with the top three being Innovation, Value for Money, and Measuring Results in Empowerment and Accountability. These were further discussed with the organisations that decided to focus on Peer Evaluations as the main topic of exchange for 2015. A meeting was then held where organisations shared their own experiences with peer evaluations.

PEER EVALUATIONS	
Requirements for success	Brief description
Joint planning A shared vision and goals between the organisations A clear rationale for the peer learning initiative Purpose of the initiative - What it intends to achieve/ deliver Clear membership to the initiative/ group Scope of areas for learning and proposed activities Management of meetings (Frequency, timing, chairing, minute taking etc.) Learning is underpinned by programme principles: Reflective Practice and Collaboration & Knowledge Sharing	Benefits Value for Money - Cost saving as peers are used for free or lower cost than external consultants More openness between the organisations for critical reflection Recommendations embedded in contextual and organisational knowledge and understandings Strengthening of relationships between peer organisations

Internally, the organisation has also developed ways of gathering information regarding its institutional effectiveness and the 360 degree evaluations that occur annually. By improving the systems for data capturing and analysis the organisation is able to produce useful outputs that facilitate engagement and integration into work. Internal learning continues to be emphasised in GL with several platforms created

for this. On one hand, internal seminars take place on different themes during the year, allowing people to share learnings and creating space for debate on challenging topics. During 2015 GL focused on disability. GL continues to produce a collection of learning journeys from staff. These are powerful narratives from each staff member regarding something they learnt during the year.