

STRATEGIC POSITIONING

In preparation for the Post-2015 agenda, the GL Board conducted a thorough audit of its operating environment, and of GL's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities at its October 2015 meeting. These resulted in the adoption of the 2016 to 2020 strategy. The environment scan also resulted in an updating of GL's mission and vision and its Theory of Change. GL is strengthening its links with men's organisations, and streamlining its programmes to become more effective. Against the major threat of funding cuts, especially in the four middle income SADC countries (South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and Seychelles), GL is seeking to strengthen its presence in its South African head office, in its Lusophone and Francophone bases, as well as in its country work more broadly.

Context



Southern Africa, like many regions in the world, is confronting the chasm between progressive *rhetoric* of gender equality, and the *reality* of huge social, political and economic gender gaps. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) typifies the observation call that: "In recent years, many low- and middle-income countries have experienced substantial economic growth. However, this has not automatically led to more gender equality or to an improvement in the position of women." ¹

SADC this is the only region in the world to have adopted a legally binding Protocol with 28 targets in ten sectors to be achieved by 2015, now being updated and aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (see case study one). Many SADC countries have strengthened the gender provisions in their Constitutions. With an average of 27% women in parliament and 24% in local government, SADC fares relatively well in the global stakes of women's political representation. Most countries in the region have achieved gender parity at primary and secondary school, and maternal mortality rates are dropping.

However, women remain the majority of the poor, the dispossessed, the landless and the unemployed. HIV and AIDS has reversed many of the fragile gains made. Women constitute the majority of those infected and affected by the pandemic that has added to the unwaged work of women, and left young girls and older women fending for whole families. Customary practices undermine Constitutions and laws, sometimes condoning gender violence, one of the most telling indicators of gender inequality.

Research conducted by GL in six of the fifteen countries in the region shows that between half and two-thirds of women in Southern Africa have experienced some form of violence over their lifetime, up to 20% within the last year.² These studies, which include an attitude survey, show that while the majority of men say they believe women and men are equal, a shockingly high proportion believe that a man has a right to beat his wife. While attitude surveys show that women have slightly more progressive views than men, they show that many women have been socialised into believing in their own inferiority. They also believe that their communities hold highly conservative views, resulting in women being ready to claim their rights but feeling trapped by the attitudes around them.

Since 2005 GL (GL) has provided the Secretariat for the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance that produces 15 country and one regional Barometer to track progress in the attainment of the 28 targets of the Protocol in the 15 member countries of SADC.

Measuring change

Progress is measured using two yardsticks, the **SADC Gender Development Index (SGDI)** which is based on empirical data collected on 23 indicators on six areas (Governance, Education and training, Productive resources and employment, economic empowerment, Sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and Media and information and communication) and the **Citizen Scorecard (CSC)** based on citizen perception.

At 67% and 68% respectively, the SGDI and CSC scores show that the region is only two thirds where it should be by 2015.

The Alliance also administers a **Gender Progress Score** used to measure changes in attitude towards gender equality, and the **Knowledge Score Card** is used to gauge how well the SADC Gender Protocol



is known. These are administered to over 8000 women and men in the region each year. Since 2010, the Alliance and partners have convened the annual **SADC Protocol@Work summits**, at district, national and regional level, showcasing how this instrument is being used at local and national level, by the media, government and civil society, to bring about change. To date over 2000 **SADC Protocol@Work** case studies have been collected through the annual SADC Gender Protocol Summits hosted by the

SADC Gender Alliance in collaboration with local government and the media and support from Gender Ministries. These case studies provide qualitative insights on how the SADC Gender Protocol is being used as a tool to promote gender equality by governments and civil society alike in the final countdown to 2015.

The Post 2015 context and frameworks

In 2014, the Alliance mounted a Post-2015 campaign from national to regional to global level. Country level consultations focused on getting Member States to buy into reviewing the Protocol. Countries such as Namibia demonstrated how the Protocol has strengthened gender mainstreaming through alignment and costing of gender action plans.

The Alliance began 2015 with a campaign demanding that the region:

- Conduct a thorough and honest review of the last seven years, and use this to reposition for 2030.
- Ensure that all gender provisions of the SDGs are incorporated.
- Go further than the SDGs on gender, media and ICTs.
- Strengthen the sustainable development provisions of the SADC Gender Protocol.
- Strengthen the rights-based language in the SADC Gender Protocol.
- Remove contradictions and anomalies around custom, tradition and religion.
- Adopt an implementation framework with strong gender disaggregated indicators.

Since the 2014 Barometer, the Alliance has been reviewing the Protocol targets against the agreed 17 goals and 169 indicators of the SDGs. The Alliance found that the Protocol needs to be bolder and more specific in a number of areas. Target five of the SDG's

on gender equality goes much further than its predecessor MDG 3. The global agenda includes GBV, has a number of economic indicators (including the unwaged work of women); goes beyond numbers in women's political participation through provisions for "effective" leadership and pushes some boundaries on reproductive health and rights.

On the other hand, the SDGs are thin on gender, media and ICT's, sparking an outcry by the Global Alliance on Media and Gender (GAMAG). Globally, all eyes are now on the indicators that will accompany the SDGs that are expected to be adopted by Heads of State at the UN General Assembly in September. The Alliance and GAMAG shared a potential 300 gender indicators with technical committees working on the global framework. As of latest count, the SDGs had 34 specific indicators on gender, a considerable improvement on the 8 in the MDG's criticised for taking a minimalist, basic needs approach to gender equality. This illustrates how Southern Africa has influenced the global gender agenda, while also looking to strengthen its own position.

The campaign has met with some resistance from the SADC Secretariat that hesitates to re-open Protocols and points out that none of its other protocols have targets let alone indicators.³ The Gender Ministers meeting in May 2015 agreed on the need to align the SADC Gender Protocol with the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and the Beijing Plus Twenty Review, and adopt a Monitoring, Evaluation and Results Framework. The meeting also raised key conceptual issues that

need to be grappled with as part of the review, including:

- How best to align the SADC Gender Protocol to the SDGs, Beijing Plus Twenty Review and the Africa 2063 Agenda.
- The balancing act between strengthening the SADC Gender Protocol and ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in all SADC Protocols.
- How to concretise key provisions in the SADC Gender Protocol that are not currently cast as targets; and
- How best to come up with timeframes and a monitoring framework, when there are such wide differences in country performance.

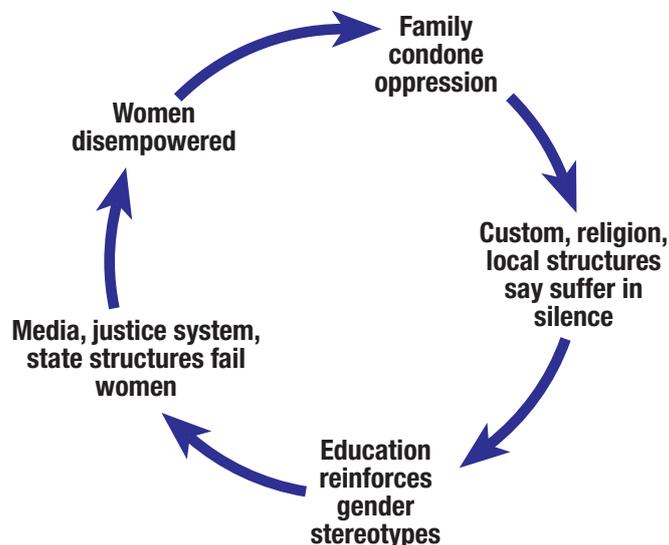
A technical meeting of UNWOMEN, the SADC Gender Protocol Alliance and the SADC Gender Unit in October 2015 began the process of redrafting the Protocol. Key gains included a specific reference to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the inclusion of climate change. The Alliance has identified further areas for lobbying in the final countdown to the SADC Heads of State summit in Swaziland in August 2016, where the Post 2015 SADC Gender Protocol is expected to be adopted.

Vision, mission and Theory of Change updated

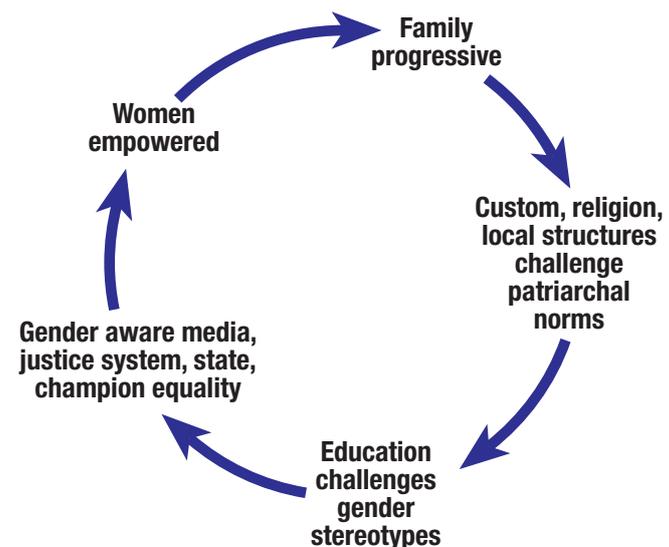
In 2015 GL revisited its vision, mission and Theory of Change to take account of the Post-2015 agenda, as well the need to acknowledge the multiple forms of exclusion; how these intersect; and how gender is a factor in all of them.

GL's vision now reads: "GL is committed to an inclusive, equal and just society in the public and private space in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development." GL's mission has been updated to read: "GL achieves its vision through a people-centred approach guided by the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development *that is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals, Beijing Plus Twenty and Africa Agenda 2063.*"

The GL ToC borrows from the ecological model often used in gender analysis that illustrates the *vicious negative cycle* reinforcing gender inequality. Each one of these layers can equally become a *virtuous positive cycle* challenging these deeply entrenched values, attitudes, systems and norms. Unlike sex, a biological given, gender is a social construct that can be deconstructed. The media may be a part of the problem, or it can be part of the solution. State policies, laws and structures can be transformed to champion gender equality.



Communities can be mobilised to reject negative practices, attitudes and tendencies. Women and girls can be mobilised to claim their rights. The growing men-for-change movement is testimony to the fact that boys and men can rise above and challenge social norms - hence the slogan, "*men of quality believe in equality.*"



In 2015 GL strengthened its ToC by adding that "several other forms of exclusion intersect with gender to compound the misogyny associated with patriarchal norms. These include race, class, the rural/urban divide, age, disability, occupation (especially sex work), sexual orientation and gender identity. These often multiple burdens of exclusion result in even higher levels of violence for certain categories of women. For example disabled women experience high levels of stigma and cultural myths relating to their physical impairments as well as high levels of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse."

To deepen debate on key contentious issues in its work, GL in 2014 added five questions to the online Gender Progress Score (GPS)⁴ used to measure gender attitudes, based on a World Health Organisation (WHO) survey. These cover sexual orientation and gender identity; customary practices; sex work and abortion.

Men as partners

GL's Theory of Change states that gender equality comprises two essential components: empowering women who in every respect (social, political and economic) have been relegated to second class citizens to claim their rights; as well as changing the attitudes of men and helping them to understand that this is not a zero sum game. GL's work on attitudes shows that the challenge is more complex than just "empowering women and changing the attitudes of men".

The ToC states that: "Neither women nor men are homogenous. For example poor, rural, disabled men may be more discriminated against and have a lower sense of self-esteem than rich, urban able-bodied women. All too often women also need to challenge their deeply ingrained patriarchal views such as the widespread view that a woman should obey her husband. Homophobia, a close cousin of patriarchy, runs high in every country. Unlocking the human potential of all the region's people is a win-win formula. GL is committed to **"transformative change"** - creating an enabling environment for women, men and LGBTI persons to achieve equality." In 2015, after reviewing M&E data showing a declining proportion of men participating in GL work, GL resolved to strengthen its work with men's group. One of GL's new board members, Mbuyiselo Botha, is a globally well-known advocate of men's involvement in promoting gender equality. He explains further on why he joined GL:

Why I joined GL

By Mbuyiselo Botha, GL Board Member and men-for-change activist



I have always struggled with the question of inequality in our society. I have also detested any form of injustice whenever it occurred. I was raised in a community that was exposed to both inequality, injustice and violence. This violence was perpetuated by men against men, women and children in the community I lived in. The inequality and injustice were in fact the face of the brutal system of apartheid which were declared a crime against humanity by the whole world. Growing up under such a system which made me realise that inequality, injustice and violence should never be tolerated in a society.

The liberation movement taught me not to accept or condone any form of inequality whenever it occurred. For more than 25 years I have dedicated my life to eradicating violence against women in our country as my commitment towards creating a society that rejected all forms of oppression whatever they are, whenever they occur. It is this commitment that led me and other men in South Africa to form the South African Men's Forum, whose purpose was to engage, mobilise and galvanise men's as allies in the fight against gender violence. We believed then and we still do that men have a stake in ensuring that they hold other men responsible and accountable for their violent actions.



Mbuyiselo Botha and GL CEO Colleen Lowe Morna at a conference on the role of the media in promoting gender equality. Photo: Gender Links

We were convinced that men cannot fold their arms when women are violated. We believe that eradicating inequality, injustice and all forms of violence is a men's business and therefore all of us as men should speak with one voice that no violence will be perpetuated in our name, that no culture and/or religion will be used in our name to denigrate, disrespect and dehumanise women.

We further believe that men will speak against all forms of oppression wherever they are, be it in the workplace, at church and/or parliament. Men will not connive or condone any sexist remarks, neither

will they be part of any group that does not support the ethos of gender equality and transformation. It is against this background that I joined GL as both a volunteer in its programmes and a board member believing in the values that this organisation believed in for the last 15 years.

GL has given me an opportunity as person to learn at a practical level what violence does to women in Africa as a whole. My involvement with GL has enriched my understanding of the value that women leadership bring in an organisation. GL has enabled me to play my part in mobilising other men to realise a role that we can play in supporting women's endeavours in liberating themselves. It has further given me an opportunity to stand back and not yield to the temptation of a taking a lead role as a man in the gender struggle. It has taught me the value of

being humble as a man when one works with the gender equality struggle. The lesson for me is that as a man, this is a space that I should not contemplate or countermand taking a lead role because it is an invited space and a privileged one. It taught me what humility is all about.

Working with a group of dedicated, committed people towards the total emancipation of women has been a great privilege and more importantly a huge learning experience for me personally. GL has exposed me to the realities of women's struggles against poverty, illiteracy, injustice, violence and the ravages of HIV/AIDS. It has taught me the importance of working with women at all levels in our society, especially those found in the rural areas, whose struggles adversely impacts and affects their children.

Risk analysis

Key risks	Mitigation
EXTERNAL	
Governments failing to act timeously and progressively on the review of the SADC Gender Protocol that forms the backbone of GL's work at local, national, regional and global level.	GL and Alliance members must work strategically through progressive member states in designing an implementation framework linked to the SDGs, Beijing Plus Twenty and the African Union Agenda 2063. All agree on the need to step up implementation. This common meeting ground can be used to press home other demands.
Failure by the UN to open up the Post 2015 SDGs draft targets and indicators to include gender, media and ICTS.	Work through UNESCO and UNWOMEN; use the SADC example of how data on "voice" has helped to move the gender agenda forward.
Media houses not fully implementing their gender policies resulting in a drop in the proportion of women sources.	Use the GMPS to evaluate the gender and media landscape overall, and to reposition post-2015, taking account of new realities such as new media, work with media training institutions etc.
Possible backtracking in women's political representation in local elections in South Africa, Lesotho and Madagascar; resistance to quotas.	Use the example of Mauritius where there has been a change of government but women's representation at local level has been retained thanks to the 2012 quota to elevate this campaign.
INTERNAL	
The funding crisis that is being experienced by Women's Rights Organisations (WRO) around the world, especially following the decision by the Dutch government to only grant nine large INGOs FLOW 2 funds.	GL is part of a global campaign to draw attention to the needs of middle size WRO in the global south that are falling between the cracks. GL has also entered into several consortium in a bid to work more strategically in bidding for global funds in the future.
Succession planning in a time of financial stress, in which there is limited scope for error, and where a high degree on institutional knowledge, networks and manoeuvring are required.	In October 2015 the Board crafted a more measured strategy that includes appointing a director of programmes, and experts to assist in the diversification strategy. It is better to make haste slowly than to risk major changes at a time of uncertainty.
Staff movements as a result of short term contracts, uncertainty, high work-loads and stress.	Despite funding uncertainties, GL has taken prudent and bold moves to promote staff retention. These include deployment of staff to the income generating service units, as well as quoting all staff salaries in US dollars to ward against exchange rate losses.

Opportunities

- The Post 2015 SADC Gender Protocol with its strong Monitoring, Evaluation and Results (MER) Framework paves the way for strengthening the SADC Gender and Development Index (SGDI), and for getting governments to buy-into it as a monitoring tool.
- GL is firmly rooted on the ground through the 450 Centres of Excellence (COE) for gender in local government in ten countries that it is working with. These councils provide a tremendous base and reach. They also provide a framework that needs to be continually reinforced. The entrepreneurship training for survivors of gender violence, anchored by the councils, showed how this base can be leveraged in the future in key areas such as GBV, economic empowerment, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and climate change.
- GL's strong institutional ties with 108 Media Centres of Excellence and nine media training institutions across Southern Africa provides a firm base for its media work. The Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) covering gender in media content, within the media, and in media training, will provide a wealth of data for advocacy post-2015.
- GL has taken giant strides in diversifying its funding base through GL Services - comprising GL Cottages, GL Advisory Services and the GL Training Institute with three accredited courses (gender awareness; gender mainstreaming and gender and media literacy). GL will now add to this an entrepreneurship course for survivors of GBV as part of a package to empower survivors of GBV that includes the "I" Stories - first-hand accounts - and business skills.

GL strategic thrust 2016 to 2020

Core programmes	New directions	Geographical base
SADC Gender Protocol & Alliance	Post 2015 Monitoring Evaluation and Results Framework; revision of the SGDI and CSC; building five strong theme groups in the Alliance.	In 2008 GL had a head office in South Africa ; Botswana SADC liaison office and Francophone base in Mauritius , and new offices in Lesotho and Madagascar . GL had project sites in four other countries. GL opened a Lusophone office in Mozambique , capitalising on the SADC Heads of State summits in Luanda in 2011, and in Maputo in 2012.
Gender & Media	Using the GMPS to name and shame, revive media activism, the GMDC, connecting, collecting, collaborating.	
Gender Justice	Demand-driven approach on GBV Indicators; taking the research to the local level and strengthening action plans; economic empowerment, SRHR for survivors of GBV.	
Gender & Governance	Driving the 50/50 campaign, especially at local level; aligning gender action plans to the post-2015 agenda; introducing grades and levels of COE; establishing COE "hubs" that can support weaker councils; peer learning and sharing.	
CROSS CUTTING THEMES		
Inclusion	ToC broadened to include other forms of exclusion - eg disability and LGBTI. These will be reflected in programme work.	From 2012 to 2013 GL registered offices in four other countries - Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe .
Gender and climate change	Climate change, SRHR added as cross-cutting themes in all programme work, especially the Alliance, local government COE.	GL would like to open a small office in Malawi to take forward the work on gender in local government following local elections there in 2014. GL sees a real need to extend the GBV indicators research to the DRC with its history of sexual assault as a weapon on war.
Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights		
Youth	Will be a key target in all GL's work, reflected in disaggregation of all data by age. At the local level GL will work through junior councillors.	
RESULTS FOR CHANGE		In 2016 GL will investigate registering an international office in the USA to facilitate fund raising.
Monitoring, evaluation, knowledge, innovation, learning, VFM	Use on on-line surveys; tablets for research; visualisation of data; info graphics. Repositioning the Southern African Learning Partnership (SALP) post DFID PPA.	
INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS		
Website and IT	Visualising data and enhancing E governance through google earth mapping of the COE's.	
Human Resources	Succession planning; staff retention and well-being.	
Physical infrastructure	Excellent management of all assets to enhance their value.	
DIVERSIFICATION		
GL Advisory Services	Marketing research, gender mainstreaming, speaking skills; surveys and tools.	
GL Resources	Marketing the online shop - books and photos.	
GL Training	Accreditation as a trainer in other middle income countries - Botswana, Namibia and possibly Zambia. Accreditation of the entrepreneurship course.	
GL Cottages	Further diversification of the product base (events, shuttle services, tours), online marketing; integration with GTI to secure fixed contracts.	

Geographical positioning

In line with the 2020 vision exercise, GL has decided not to spread its wings beyond Southern Africa, in order to consolidate its position in the region. Over the last three years, GL has registered offices in Mauritius (to cover the Francophone countries) and Botswana (home of the SADC Secretariat). We officially opened a Lusophone office there on 17 March 2011 (GL's tenth anniversary) and launched a series of integrated programmes aimed at enhancing the attainment of the SADC Gender Protocol targets.

Just as Madagascar serves as our Francophone base the Mozambique office will serve as our Lusophone base, enabling us to begin meaningful work in Angola, a country that several Southern African NGOs including our own have struggled to reach out to. Over the last four years, GL has registered six more offices in its previous "project sites" enabling these offices to engage in fund raising initiatives. These are: Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Geographical spread of GL's work across the 15 SADC countries

	SADC Gender Protocol	Governance	Media	Justice	
Anglophone				National Action Plan	GBV indicators
South Africa (GL HQ)					
Botswana (SADC HQ)					
Lesotho					
Namibia					
Swaziland					
Zambia					
Zimbabwe					
Malawi					
Tanzania					
Lusophone					
Mozambique (GL Lusophone office)					
Angola					
Francophone					
Madagascar (GL Francophone office)					
Mauritius					
Seychelles					
DRC					

Notes: 1) Blue = GL offices. 2) Although Mauritius and Seychelles both have English as an official language, they are bilingual (offering a useful spring board for GL work) and geographically close. GL work in Seychelles is managed from Mauritius.

The table shows the geographical spread of GL's work. It shows that:

- The Southern Africa Gender Protocol work covers all 15 countries of SADC (Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone), while the media work covers 13 countries, also across the three language groups.
- GL's ten country operations (in blue) align closely to the governance work (that involves working with 450 councils that have elected to become Centres of Excellence for Gender and Local Government).
- GL now has a good spread of programme work in Mozambique. However, GL's work in Angola (one of the most expensive countries in the world) remains weak, with only the SADC Gender Protocol work being implemented.

- GL's most comprehensive programme coverage in in the six countries that have also undertaken the GBV indicators research - South Africa, Botswana, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Lesotho.

Going forward

- GL will consider the desirable balance between full offices, project sites, and new offices based on funding and strategic considerations.
- The most likely venture will be in the DRC (where GL has a strong foundation with its media work, and where the GBV indicators study is urgently required).
- GL is also likely to strengthen its presence in Malawi that had local elections for the first time last year.

This opens the door for work on Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government. However, GL will need to consider the desirability of opening an office as opposed to working through partners and maintaining a “lighter” presence through a project site.

- GL may also scale back existing offices to project sites, especially in the Middle Income Countries where funding is increasingly challenging. These countries (South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius and Botswana) will also become an important testing ground for diversification of funding sources through income generating activities.

Country operations - GL's hands and feet

By Rethabile Pholo, GL Board Member and Chair of the Country Operations Committee



“The GL satellite and field offices have demonstrated the value of having representation on the ground. They are able to take up complex programmes, like the gender violence indicators, or the work with local government, and to ensure effective back up and follow up.” (*GL Vision 2020*).

Imagine how odd and weird it would be if the human body had no arms and legs, hands and feet? Movement from one place to the other would be greatly compromised. Handling of anything would be totally impossible. We would not witness the good things around us that have contributed immensely to the development of the world.

This is not only the case with human beings. The same goes for the many institutions that we see around us; GL included.

GL is a Non-Governmental Organisation established in March 2001 with the purpose of promoting gender equality and justice - “a region in which women and men are able to participate equally in all aspects of public and private life in accordance with the provisions of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development.”

It would not have been possible for GL to fan across the SADC region operating entirely from its offices at Headquarters. Hence GL had to create limbs, to which would be attached the hands and feet. These limbs would be the GL Country Offices around the SADC Region. These would be offices that would carry out the mandate of GL in all SADC member states on the ground.

The importance of these offices is that they are able to reach places which GL would not otherwise be able to reach if the activities of the institution were centrally located. GL opened Francophone and Lusophone offices headquartered in Mauritius and Mozambique respectively. These offices were meant to target French and Portuguese speaking countries in the region. Country Offices were also registered in Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar (which later took over as the Francophone head office), Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Gone are the days when partners accused GL of being a South African organisation working in other Southern African countries through subcontracts with its local partners. The Country Managers have become regular faces in government ministries, especially the Ministries of Gender. They have become regulars in the Community Based Organisations which work towards the emancipation of both women and men.



Matau Futho-Letsatsi and Rethabile Pholo.

Photo: Gender Links

Initially, GL did not have an office in Lesotho, but with time, on realising the need to strengthen the national work and partnership activities, they established a national office. Both organisations are

¹ The Gender Dividend: Making the business case for investing in women. Deloitte, 2011 <http://www.slideshare.net/ljubab/the-gender-dividend-making-the-business-case-for-investing-in-women>.
² Violence Against Women Baseline studies in South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho - see <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/gender-justice-measuring-gbv>
³ E Mail communication with the Alliance, E Kakukuru; 11 May, 2015.
⁴ See <http://genderlinks.org.za/survey/surveys.php?surveyID=1>.

now working together very closely. The Director of Gender in the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation (MGYSR), 'Matau Futho-Letsatsi, says: "We have done so much together over the years. We have held workshops and events, we are training women and men to act in a gender aware way. There are so many strengths in our work together. "We have officers in the districts, and whenever GL goes there for work, we are together. We have the human resources, and they have a package of information and trainings for community and district councils. By working together, it enhances our mandate, and pushes forward our common agenda."

Ironically, with the shrinking funding landscape, the country-work most threatened is in GL's home base, South Africa, regarded a middle-income country. In the articles that follow, my fellow board members reflect on why GL should remain strong in its home base, while also strengthening other bases, notably the Francophone and Lusophone bases.

Why GL must remain strong in South Africa

By Thoko Mpumlwana, GL South Africa Board Member



My reflections on why GL is essential in the South African gender discourse sadden me. I have seen many very important women's organisations and NGO's die in the past 25 years mainly because of human and financial resources challenges. I am a firm believer in the role of NGO's in nation building and service delivery.

I have witnessed, in awe, the road travelled by GL in advancing gender not only in South Africa but also in SADC and lately in the world. Therefore, South Africa cannot afford another NGO pulling out or folding up when the women's movement and gender discourse is so heavily challenged. We need GL!

South Africa is renowned for its vibrant assertive and united women's movement dating back from 1954 when progressive women in their diversity and numbers adopted **The Women's Charter** that declared "We the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, African, Indian, European, Coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population"

Fast forward to February 1994 when women in all their diversity including political parties, Non-Government Organisations(NGO's), Faith Based Organisations(FBO's), professional and social movements came together from all walks of life adopted "**The Women's Charter for Effective Equality**". The 1994 Charter "gives expression to the common experiences, visions, and aspirations of South African Women. We are breaking our silence. We call for respect and recognition of our human dignity and for a genuine change in our status and material conditions in a future South Africa."

At that time, women were united for a common vision. Their efforts paid off with a visible legal and policy framework. However, it seems to me that the women's movement has lost momentum and vigilance and we see patriarchy confidently rearing its head again through practices like gender based violence, harmful traditional practices, overlooking of women in leadership especially at local governance and so on.

GL, as the name suggests, is a chain that seeks to link organisations with similar objective to bring justice to all not only within South Africa but also at SADC level. GL is a learning organisation that is connected to the people it serves. GL researches realities of women so as to link those realities with policies of the countries they belong to. GL lobbies for policies that seek to improve attitudes and lives of women. GL is also an organisation that believes in excellence, promotes diversity and advocates for meaningful partnerships.

In South Africa, GL has been collating information that feeds into profiling the status of women in South Africa. That information has been used by researchers, policy makers and government in country reports in fulfilment of its obligations in terms of regional and international protocols like CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, SADC Gender Protocols and in fulfilment of constitutional gender rights and freedom in South



GL and SAWID partnered in the "Women Demand Change" campaign. SAWID is the Alliance focal network in South Africa. Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Africa. GL reports are extensively cited in papers and reports on gender and women in South Africa. The SADC Gender Protocol Barometer helps put a mirror to all of us on our performance.

GL also keeps South African gender activists, women and feminists connected through the SADC Gender Protocol Alliance. That alliance gives women of SADC informed voice and agency even if not all women are able to attend those national, regional and international forums. In partnership with South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID), GL keeps women in South Africa able to dialogue and updated.

One of the key activities that South African women and gender activists look forward to is the regional SADC Protocol@Work Summit where activists and practitioners come together to share notes on how to make their localities and their communities genders sensitive context of excellence. So GL keeps us South Africa women connected to these regional networks. GL connects dots from local level to global level. Isolation breeds ignorance and intolerance of diversity. GL has made a big contribution in assisting the media to transform through its research, advocacy, policy and training. There has been a shift in how women in South Africa are portrayed in the media and in how they participate in the media. Of course, a lot more still needs to be done for journalists and editors to report in a gender-aware way.

Down memory lane: GL's Francophone operations

By Loga Virahsammy, GL Board Member and Chair of the Programmes Committee



"Veni, vidi, vici" (Classical Latin: "I came; I saw; I conquered"): so Julius Caesar told the Roman Senate around 47 BC after he had achieved a quick victory in his short war against Pharnaces II of Pontus at the Battle of Zela.

Fifteen years ago, GL saw the opportunity to venture into the French speaking countries of Southern Africa. On paper, there are two French speaking countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) - DRC and Madagascar. But Mauritius and Seychelles have strong French roots and affiliations. Indeed, GL used its firm base in Mauritius, and the bilingual advantages of the island, to springboard into Francophone SADC.

Our work during the past 15 years in Mauritius, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Seychelles has opened our minds to see and do things differently and reach new horizons. Each country has

I think it would also be awkward to have a GL office in South Africa servicing SADC and have no local activities. With GL Cottages being utilised by social justice activists from all over the world, what better way for us South Africans to learn and exchange experiences and share solutions to problems with others from the region through the interface at the Cottages. The Cottages also role models the spirit of "women doing it for themselves". We need more such role models for South African women where our past has virtually indoctrinated us into believing that we are not good enough.

It is a fact that GL is experiencing what all other NGO's are facing with regard to depletion of financial resources. That calls for new ways of working and reaching out to more to local sources of funding. If South Africa is serious about dealing with poverty and inequality it has to support and enhance the capacity of NGO's to reach out to the majority of citizens who are women.

I, therefore, say a big NO to a possibility of GL disappearing in the landscape of South Africa. We need GL more than ever before. The gender discourse and women's movement in South Africa need to be resuscitated before we lose on all the gains that were made through sweat and tears of those who have come before us and those who laid the foundation for gender equality and women empowerment.

its own specificity but our biggest success in Mauritius, Madagascar and DRC has been working with grassroots.

Fifteen years of growing pains has shown us that our services are still needed. It has given greater responsibilities to the Satellite Offices and the project sites. The communities need us. Throughout this growth we have tested the culture of GL: a culture of gender justice. We did a wide range of research in all four countries, produced training manuals and research publications.

When we opened the Mauritian Office in September 2008 the word gender was not well understood. The Registrar of Companies had problems identifying in which category to register us. The Municipal Council had the same problem. Gender Equality, Gender Justice, Gender Based Violence, Gender and the Media, Gender and Governance were not on the list of trades. We went through great lengths to explain

to the authorities the work of GL. We could not just choose from poultry, pigs, jewellery or furniture but finally the authorities just put “business address” on our registration. It was easier in Madagascar as the procedures are less complicated while in Seychelles and in DRC we have project sites.



More work, more questions: GL Board Member Loga Virasawmy fields questions from the media. Photo: Gender Links

After 15 years GL can now put any trade if we have to apply for registration. The survivors we are training on Entrepreneurship and life skills in Mauritius and Madagascar cover a wide range of trades. With our Gender and Media programmes we have trained journalists to access different voices, views and angles for their articles. Women entrepreneurs in different sectors are regularly featured in the media. Our Gender and Governance programmes have changed the scenery in localities in Mauritius and Madagascar. There is a close collaboration between localities and women at grassroots levels. There are localities in Madagascar that have hot lines for survivors. There are localities in Mauritius that have a GL corner in their libraries. Quite a few localities in both Mauritius and Madagascar have Gender Committees with their own budget.

Having satellite offices or project sites does not mean that we do less work. On the contrary we do all the programmes of GL with less staff. Fortunately we have the mentality of “no pain no gain”. The gain is visible. The recognition of our work from all corners in the four countries comes with pain. The results and products at country level are here to stay.

I really fought my way to get a foot in DRC. I was officially sent by GL to look for partners to work with. PANOS, HAM (High Authority of Media) and UCOFEM (Congolese Union of African Media Women) have opened doors for us and we are still working with them. I still remember how the Mauritian authorities advised me not to go to a country which just came out of war. They said that they could not

help me as I was not a government official. But when I told them they would have to bear the consequence of seeing my dead body coming back from a plane they immediately sent a letter to the authorities in DRC. It was a frightening setting foot in this country: my first experience with the military at an airport. There were no conveyer belts, let alone trolleys. We had to identify our overweight suitcases full of training manuals that our French editor Marie Annick Savripène, and I had to carry. But it was worth it. DRC is a place where people are really grateful for small mercies. I am still humbled by the warmth of people there.

In Seychelles as I was not getting any response from anybody, I wrote to the office of the President. Suddenly all doors opened and the work of GL became quite smooth. I am so happy that we are now conducting the Gender Based Violence Indicators Project there with funding from the Australian High Commission.

Madagascar started with Ialfine Papisy being my dinner guest together with GL CEO Colleen Lowe Morna. Papisy did not waste one second, stating she wanted a GL office in Madagascar forthwith. A few days later I found myself in Madagascar on a scouting mission. It did not take long for GL to have a full fledged office working all over this huge country.

I have worked with men in Mauritius and Madagascar who at the start of our work said we were threatening their homes, but four days later had nothing but praise for GL. They are grateful that we are lighting their way and showing them how to share responsibilities in families; how to change attitudes and mind-sets; how the patriarchal attitudes can do more harm than good. In Mauritius and Madagascar survivors have become entrepreneurs through GL programmes. They have vowed that nobody will lay hands on them. In Mauritius some of them are now mentors to survivors in their localities.

For the past four years a wide range of professionals including grassroots women and men as well as journalists and media enterprises have had the chance to show case their best practices at the SADC Protocol Gender Justice Summit organised by GL. These projects are proof of the work of GL at country level. Both DRC and Madagascar are countries with fragile economies that are emerging from political turmoil and yet people travelled long distances to go to Kinshasa and Antananarivo to make sure that their projects go to the Summit. Mauritius, Madagascar and DRC have shared their best practices with the region.

GL can be proud that former Mauritian Minister of Local Government, Herve Aimee gave credit to GL in getting more women elected at the local level. In his keynote address at the 2012 SADC Protocol@Work Summit he said: "The New Local Government Act is indeed a milestone towards gender equality. I would like to thank (GL Francophone Director) Loga Virahsawmy and GL for all their help over the last two years ensuring that the radical changes I proposed became reality." We not only trained women to join politics but we worked with the authorities to change laws and give women space. We won. From 11.5% women councillors we are now at 30%. GL Mauritius hosted Summit winners, delegations from Madagascar and Botswana to share and learn best practices. A high level delegation from Zimbabwe came to GL Mauritius to learn more about the gender neutral approach in the New Local Government Act.

From Mauritius, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Seychelles GL is now spreading its wings in other Francophone countries through its

training. We have reached the age of maturity earlier than normal, at only 15. With our experience we have every reason to believe we can spread our wings even further. GL is now a brand in Mauritius, Madagascar, DRC and Seychelles. Yes, we came, we saw, we conquered, and now we must dream even bigger!



Former Mauritian Minister of Local Government, Herve Aimee arriving at the regional summit with Loga Virahsawmy .
Photo: Ghirish Abdhoosee

GL Lusophone Operations

By Marta Cumbi, GL Board Member



Mozambique is one of the countries where women and girls are still facing challenges due to social and traditional norms that prevent them from realising their rights. Although funding from traditional donors is shrinking due to the impact of the financial crisis, Mozambique is a promising country because of the discovery of mineral resources that can result in alternative sources of funding from the private sector.

The government has been active in ratifying international and regional instruments that protect the rights of women and girls such as CEDAW, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the Convention on the Rights of Children. The newly approved Sustainable Development Goals that defines a stand-alone goal for gender equality while pushing for gender mainstreaming across all other goals will bring a new impetus in the promotion of women rights across the globe.

The country is in a process of formulating the second National Action Plan to fight Violence and the National Plan for the Advancement of Women. GL has been contributing to the country's efforts to end gender inequality through the implementation of activities in the areas of local governance, media and women empowerment.

A lot of work has been done to build the capacity of local government for the inclusion of the gender dimension in their activities. To this end, 19 councils benefited from our work by completing the 10 stages of the Centres of Excellence and we have started engaging with other 8 councils. We are also work with the media by strengthening their capacity to report in a gender sensitive manner. Work with women victims of violence has been crucial in empowering then economically to overcome and reduce their vulnerability to violence.

Challenges that have been encountered in the course of programme include high unit costs of project implementation, lack of donor funding and the establishment of the right balance between project implementation and fundraising. With a lot of dedication from the staff, GL Mozambique managed to mobilise resources from two donors, Diakonia and Amplify Change. Additional work is underway to expand fundraising efforts to the private sector, with special attention to the extractive industries. We believe that with the right fundraising strategies we can establish medium to long-term partnerships with the private sector that will contribute to raising their profiles while increasing resources to promote gender equality in the country. Mozambicans are always sure about a brighter future. For this reason we say: *A Luta Continua e a Victória é Certa!*