

Report

Executive Director's Report

In a word, 2006/2007 can be described as hectic for GL! With some 85 events and workshops involving 2255 participants in twelve countries; 180 media queries; 24 donor applications and 36 reports; five new books and research reports, the year remained as active as ever. Yet, as the Chairperson notes, 2006/2007 can also be regarded as a turning point for us as an organisation. Our improved financial situation, strengthened networks and credibility, give us the space not to slack but to move forward in a considered way that ensures greater attention to impact and sustainability.

Making haste slowly

Describing GL as a "small organisation with large footprints" the evaluation undertaken during the year highlighted several strengths. These include strong and effective governance and transparency; excellent financial, monitoring and evaluation systems; committed and hard working staff as well as an integrated Programme of Action. The evaluation also commended GL's "way of working": identifying gaps and niches; testing new ideas through pilot projects; replicating and cascading these through working with networks; collecting and disseminating publications; tools and best practices. In a nutshell, GL is credited in the report with creating a gender and media movement in Southern Africa: no mean achievement in the short six years of our existence!

Yet the report also points out that rapid growth comes at a cost. It cautions against too much activity driven outputs that may not be followed through effectively. The report points to some areas of tension with partners and the need for these relationships to be constantly evaluated. It also underscores the human costs and need to guard against high staff turn over and burn out. An underlying theme of the report is the stress that is put on an organisation that has long term goals by short term project funding; the need for core support and basket funding.

Streamlining and balancing the POA

Against this background, GL continued in 2006/2007 to build on its strengths but also to proactively address its weaknesses. The Programme of Action (POA) has been consolidated into three core programme areas: Gender and the Media; Gender Justice and Gender and Governance.

For us, these programme areas intertwine like an intricate spider's web rather than falling into well defined silos. In the governance programme we produce 'I' stories that technically fall under the Gender and Media programme. In the Gender and Media Programme one of our flagships is the policy work of the Media Action Plan on HIV and AIDS that is in fact about media governance. Our gender justice work is shifting more from campaigns to policy or campaigns built around policy, thus

aligning it closely with our governance work.

The campaign to elevate the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development to a more legally binding Protocol provides a framework for all our work- in the media, governance and justice sectors. All of these resonate with our vision of a region in which women and men are free to realise their human potential.

But identifying these three programme areas more clearly means that within these areas of work we can focus our energies better. In GL's flagship gender and media portfolio, we recognise the skills that have been built through the gender and media networks. But we also recognise the need to continue to support and build these networks.

In 2006, GEMSA took over the administration and management of the second Gender and Media Summit that also coincided with the GEMSA General Meeting and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) AGM. However, GL research and training provided much of the substance and financial support for the summit, held under the banner "Media Diversity: Good for Democracy, Good for Sustainability."

In the research area, GL broke new ground by taking its twelve-country audience research to newsroom level and undertaking the "Glass Ceiling in Newsrooms" study with the South African National Editor's Forum. The MAP project gained momentum with buy-in from 218 newsrooms around the region to develop and implement HIV and AIDS and Gender policies.



MAP Programme Manager Dumisani Gandhi (left) hard at work

Photo: Colleen Love-Morara

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Our training programme got on the road again with the "Business Unusual" workshops on gender, economy and the media in six countries; bringing us in touch with media practitioners; helping to generate innovative new stories carried by the mainstream media and our Opinion and Commentary Service and swelling the ranks of GEMSA country chapters. We also continued to build our Virtual Resource Centre (VRC) of case studies and training tools for the media.

Breaking new ground in the work with media consumers that takes its inspiration from the Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) GL this year tested its media literacy "Watching the watchdogs" kit with members of the public. A training of trainer's workshop sought to enlist the support of media development NGOs across the region in conducting media literacy training. This year, our periodic monitoring series *Mirror on the Media* put advertisers under the spotlight. We've since moved on to tabloids as we seek to leave no stone unturned in interrogating the gender dimensions of the media.

Following the audit of commitments to end gender violence in the 2005 Sixteen Days of Action campaign, GL blazed a new trail in campaign work by promoting the idea of organising campaigns around multi-sector National Action Plans to end Gender Violence. GL and GEMSA have since worked in six countries on similar initiatives. GL continues to produce a monthly Gender Justice Barometer that tracks progress in ending gender violence, using the SADC Addendum on the Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children as a framework.

As in the past, we continue to take part energetically in the Sixteen Days of Activism campaigns, this year introducing to the region the idea from Latin America of "Take Back the Night" campaigns. Our cyber dialogues continue to link people across borders in safe spaces for speaking out. And the "I" stories brand that GL originated continued both to be a way of getting first hand accounts into the mainstream media as well as a form of therapy for those who have experienced gender

violence at first hand. They have also become the flagship of our Opinion and Commentary Service that has grown into a credible means for building bridges between activists and the mainstream media.

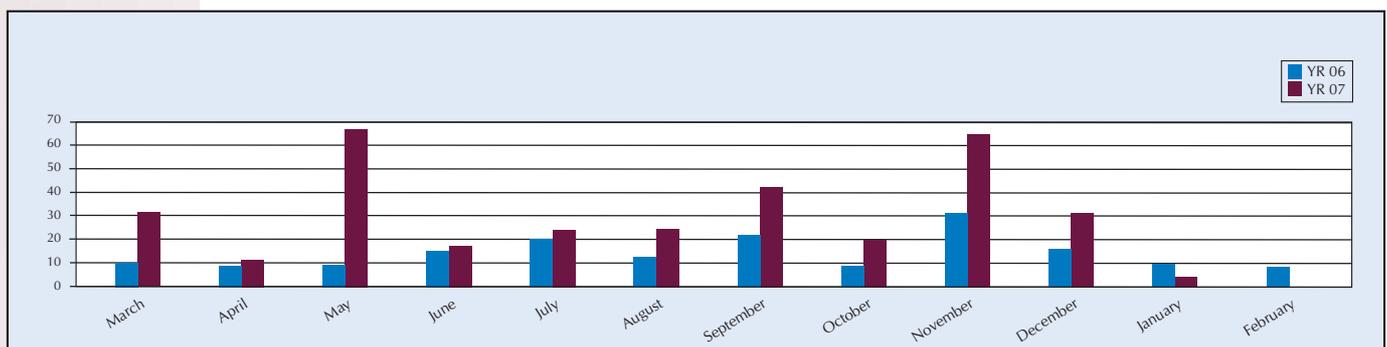
On the governance front, GL's coordination of the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance kept us busy and networked with women's rights NGOs across the region. While the Protocol has still not been adopted, the sub-regional instrument remains one of the most strategic rallying points for gender activists around the region. The twenty time bound targets provide an organising framework that GL and partners have incorporated into their work long before these are formally adopted by governments.

With the launch during the 2006/2007 board meeting of *At the Coalface: Gender and Local Government* GL is carving out a new niche in an area that has been sadly ignored in the gender and governance discourse. As I write the book is being launched in four Southern African countries alongside workshops to develop national strategies for mainstreaming gender in the work of local government. This is turn is informed by the work that GL continues to do with the City of Johannesburg that is taking on exciting new dimensions in the build up to Soccer 2010.

Media profile

As an organisation that promotes gender equality in and through the media, we often find that we become a source of information and commentary to the media. As the graph shows, during the year under review GL received 180 media queries, or an average of 3.4 queries a week. The comparative figures for 2005/2006 show that each year our media profile grows a bit more. March (International Women's Day); August (Women's month in South Africa) and November to December (the Sixteen Days of Activism) continue to be our busiest media months. In 2006/2007, May also proved to be a busy month because of the "365 Days to End Gender Violence" conference.

GL media queries



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Making IT work for GL

Just as one of our slogans is "Making IT work for Gender Justice" we continue to use IT in creative ways to grow the reach of GL's work. GL's website is comprehensive, regularly updated and receives positive feedback though we have at times had to fight off back lash from ruthless hackers (see also IT report). We have a data base of over 3000 contacts; photo library of close to 2500 images and well developed internal IT systems.

As mentioned in the Chair's report, we are also in the process of developing a Gender and Media Diversity Centre that will rely heavily on IT. Part of that has involved substantial restructuring of the GL/GEMSA premises to accommodate a library, computer room and training centre.

These innovations have gained GL a reputation for being small but catalytic; often inventing a whole new vocabulary around its work. Among some of the terms and phrases from our programme work that have entered the general vocabulary of the region are cyber dialogues; IT for Advocacy; I Stories; Business Unusual; 365 Day campaigns and indeed the whole idea of media literacy.

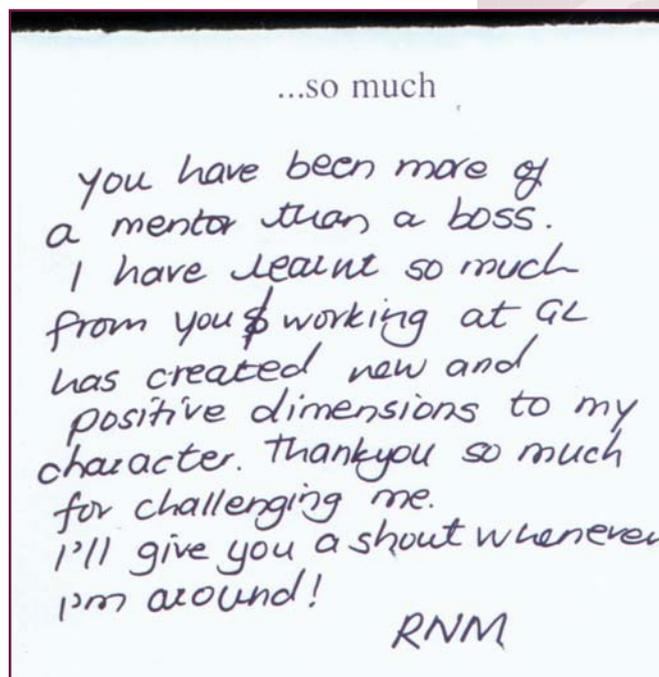
Our staff, our future

For the work it does, GL's staff is small, currently eight full time and two part time staff. These figures are somewhat understated by the fact that we have some 114 associates, partners and consultants from around the region with whom we work. GL also has an active internship programme, with three interns working with us during the period under review. We also had an innovative staff exchange programme with one of our partners, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre, during the period. These exchanges and the presence of young people in our office are invigorating and fun!

But we are still stretched! One of the challenges we set ourselves in 2007 is to build a stronger core of staff around whom other people and activities can flourish. We are seeking to replace the Deputy Director seconded to GEMSA and now running the networks, as well as build a strong middle management team. GL underwent a team review and has formed a wellness committee. Our staff guidelines are regularly reviewed and updated in the interests of strengthening institutional practice as well as helping to grow our staff.

The on-the-job training that staff members get at Gender Links is recognised (especially by those who have since moved on!) as invaluable. At the same time we are seeking to strengthen our formal skills and capacity building programme. As we move

towards greater financial sustainability (see financial report) we are better placed not just to grow but also to nurture our most valuable resource: our people.



I wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff, Board, partners, associates and families of all those we work with for your passion and commitment. Each day, with your help, we move a little closer to "making every voice count, and counting that it does!"

Colleen Lowe Morna
Executive Director

