

OVERVIEW AND GOVERNANCE

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

By Dr Muna Ndulo, Chair of the Gender Links Board



As I write this report, Joyce Banda has just become the first woman President of Malawi, and the first woman in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to lead her nation. She is choosing the high road - selling off presidential jets and refusing to host the African Union (AU) Heads of State Summit while it shields dictators wanted for war crimes by the International Court of Justice.

In South Africa, Riya Phiyega has just been appointed as the National Police Commissioner - surely a moment as profound for us as the appointment of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as deputy president, even if only for a nanosecond in political time.

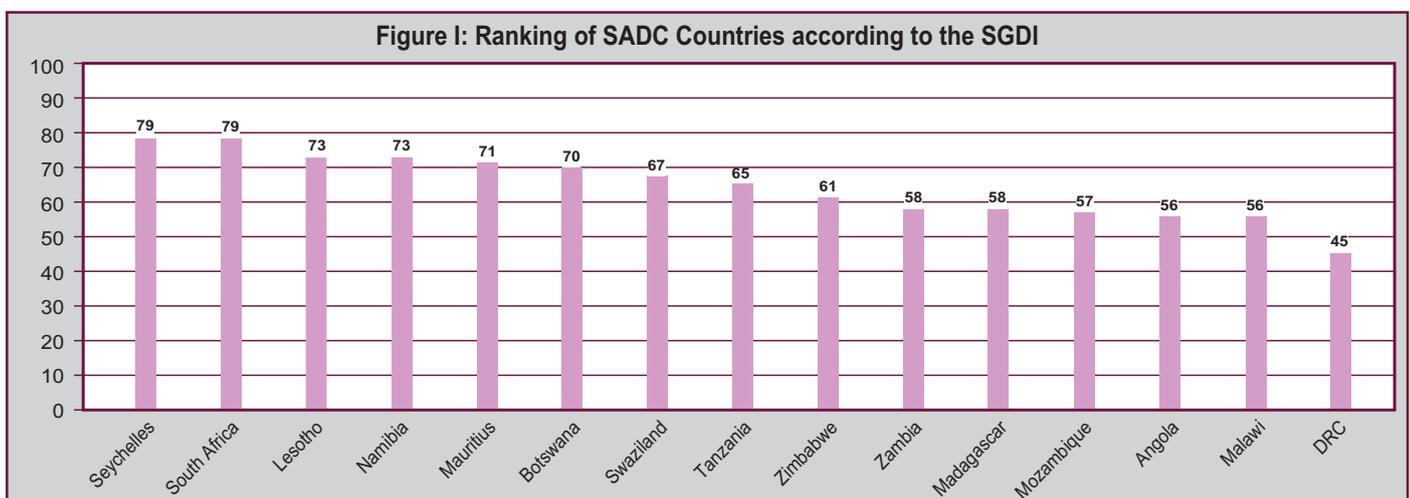
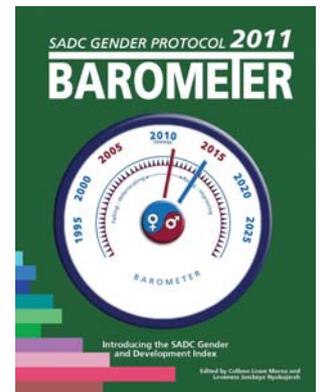
On the other hand, we are witnessing moments of deep push-back by patriarchy. Examples include the Traditional Courts Bill; the fight against gender quotas in African National Congress (ANC) branches; the parading of polygamy since President Jacob Zuma became president and opposition Democratic Alliance leader Helen Zille's peculiar interpretation of female leadership. The vehement sexism and conservatism witnessed first-hand by our Board Member and Editor of City Press Ferial Haffajee during the "Spear" debacle reminds us why the existence of strong institutions to fight for justice and equality is so important.

Though ambitious, the 28 targets of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development remain a guiding light. Over the last two years, the slogan of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that GL coordinates has progressed from yes we can to **yes we must!**

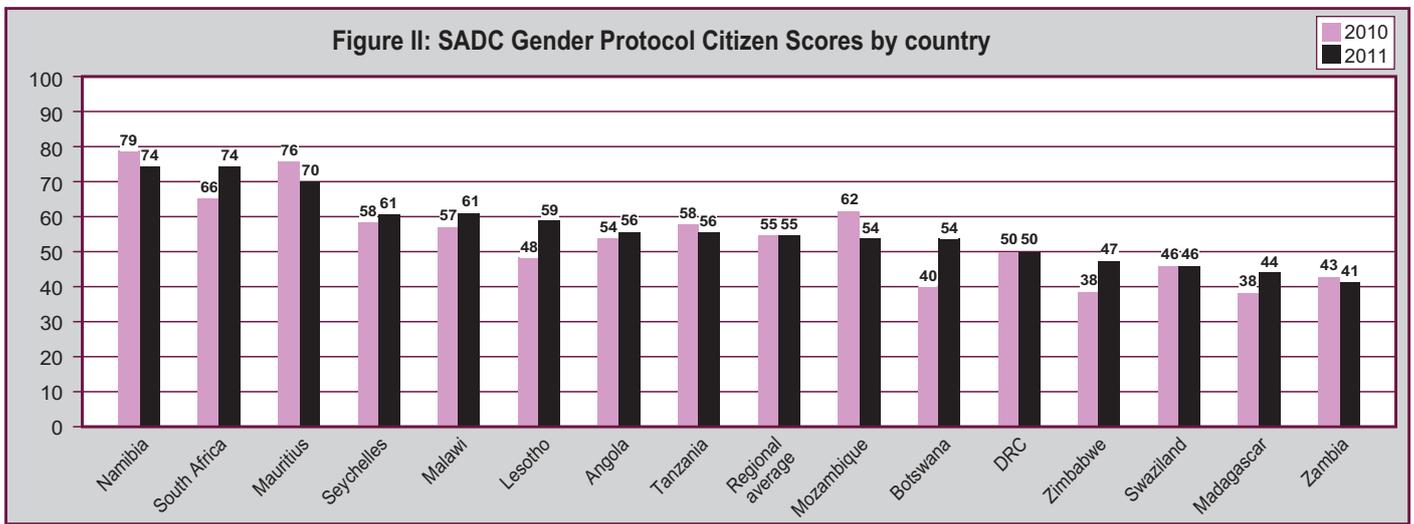
Count down to 2015 with the SDGI

In 2011, Gender Links and Alliance partners devised the SADC Gender and Development Index or SGDI to measure progress on achieving gender equality. With empirical data on 23 indicators in six sectors, the SGDI puts SADC countries at 64% of where they need to be by 2015. Seychelles, South Africa, Lesotho and Namibia lead the way with Mozambique, Angola, Malawi, and DRC in the bottom four.

Along with the SGDI is the Citizen Score Card (CSC) based on perceptions, and covering all areas of the Protocol including rights-based measures such as Constitutional and legal rights; gender violence; peace and security missing from the SGDI. Citizens rate their governments at a mere 55% (one percent up from 2010).



Source: 2011 Southern Africa Gender Protocol Barometer, Gender Links.



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Figure I and II summarise the findings of the SGDI and the CSC by country. The graphs show that:

- Seychelles, South Africa, Lesotho and Namibia in that order score highest in the SGDI. South Africa, Namibia and Seychelles are also in the top four of the citizen scorecard, but Mauritius replaces Lesotho as a best performer in the eyes of citizens.
- Mozambique, Angola, Malawi and DRC rank last in the SGDI. Citizens, in contrast, place Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Madagascar and Zimbabwe in the bottom four.
- Across the board, citizens score their governments more harshly than the SGDI. For example, Seychelles gets 79% in the SGDI but 61% in the citizen scoring exercise. Overall, the SGDI average score is 64% compared to 55% in the case of the CSC. A significant reason for this difference is that the citizen score card includes gender violence, Constitutional and legal rights, peace and security that are missing from the SGDI. These rights-based considerations are likely to considerably lower scores, and point to the importance of broadening the SGDI in the future.
- Although generally citizen scores have increased or remained the same, in some countries these have

been revised downwards (for example in Namibia, Mauritius and Mozambique).

What these numbers tell us is that there are cases of one-step forward; two steps backward. For example, in the 2011 elections Zambia experienced a decline in women's political participation at the very moment that governments need to redouble commitment to meet the targets of the Protocol. On the other hand, Mauritius, with 6% women in local government, has adopted a quota for women's representation in the coming elections. This led to the amendment of the Constitution to allow for affirmative action, opening the door for Mauritius to become a signatory to the SADC Gender Protocol.

Extending GL's strategy to 2015

In 2010, GL adopted a strategy to 2013. In the lead up to GL's tenth anniversary in 2011, we had an external evaluation that put forward several recommendations. GL is extending the three-year strategy to 2015: a significant year for gender activists, when there will be need to take stock and reposition. Key thrusts include:

Pillars of the Gender Links Strategy	
1. Strategic positioning	Consolidating the Francophone and new Lusophone base; strengthening the new offices and registering one more office in Swazilandl giving GL a presence in ten out of 15 SADC countries.
2. Governance	Ensuring that GL has Board Members in all the countries where it has offices.
3. Partnerships and networks	GL is formalising all MOU's with key partners: 100 media houses, 300 councils; over 20 institutional lead agencies in the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance; and a range of media education and development organisations linked to the Gender and Media Diversity Centre (GMDC).
4. Programme of action (POA)	GL's POA has gone from breadth to depth through institutional work at local level and in the media. Management is strengthening synergies between programmes, for example cascading GBV indicators to the local level. Gender and climate change is now a cross cutting programme through the campaign for an addendum to the Protocol on Gender and Climate Change, and training modules in the media and governance work.

5. Institutional growth and development	Country coordinators have become country managers; they are receiving training; staff, infrastructure, and systems to run effective operations outside the head office.
6. Monitoring, evaluation, knowledge and learning	GL has developed sophisticated online M and E systems used to gather a range of data on outputs, outcomes and impact. Buoyed by the DFID PPA grant, GL is linking M and E to knowledge creation and learning through the GMDC, internal learning processes like the Learning Journey, exploring commercial book options, promoting dialogue and debate, as well as joining several DFID related learning groups.
7. Sustainability	GL has developed a four-part strategy that includes 1) a vigorous fund raising campaign, especially at country level 2) Diversification through GL Services and GTI 3) Achieving greater value for money through improved procurement practice and 4) Leveraging through smart partnerships and in-kind support.

Deepening our roots in nine SADC countries



In 2010/2011, GL celebrated its tenth anniversary by opening the Lusophone office of Gender Links in Maputo. The celebrations extended to the Gender Justice and Local Government Summit in South Africa. Further celebrations took place in Botswana; Zambia; Zimbabwe; Namibia; Mauritius and Madagascar.

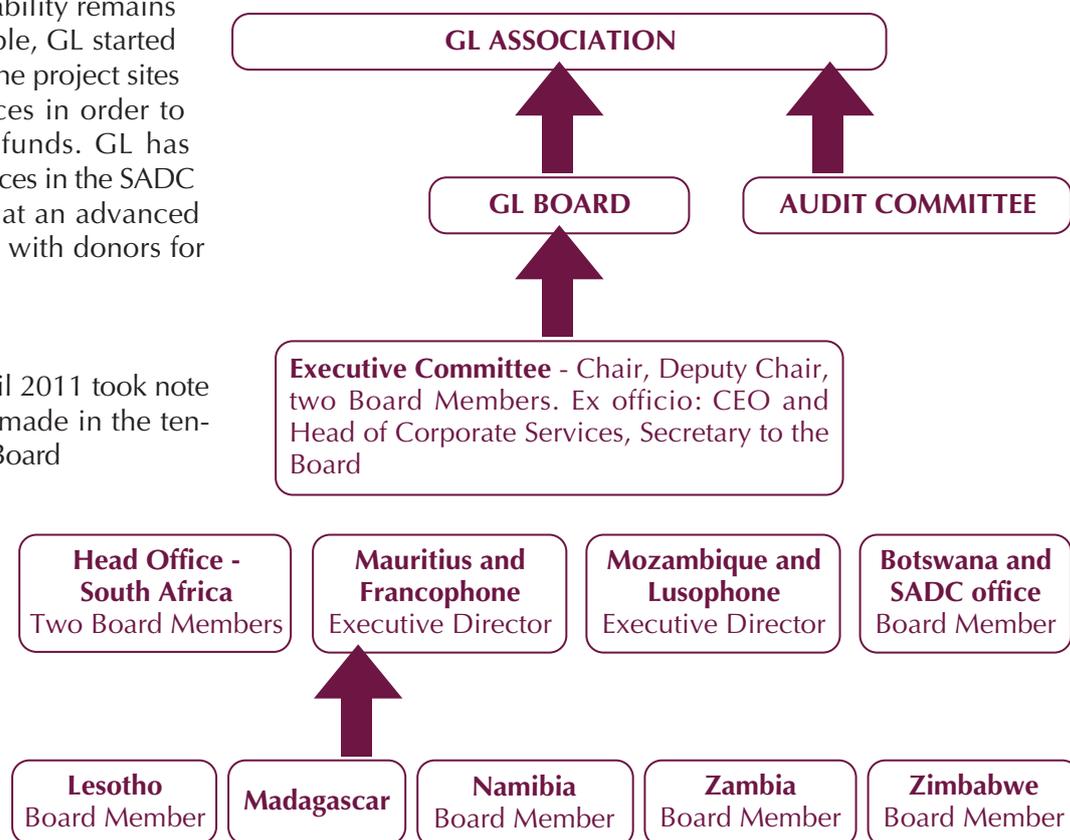
As the demand for the work grows and as it becomes increasingly difficult to access global funds at regional level due to the ripple effects of the economic slump, sustainability remains the key issue. To stay viable, GL started the process of upgrading the project sites to registered branch offices in order to access local in-country funds. GL has registered eight branch offices in the SADC region. Four of these are at an advanced stage of signing contracts with donors for in-country projects.

Strengthening the Board

The Board meeting in April 2011 took note of the recommendations made in the ten-year evaluation regarding Board members serving two four-year terms, and then stepping down for a period before being reappointed. The Board debated the issue of fixed terms but also cautioned the need for continuity and retaining essential skills. As I write, GL is

in the process of updating its Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) as required by the Companies Act that governs GL in South Africa. Key principles agreed by the Board include:

- Regular renewal without losing expertise: The Board debated the idea of a Founders Board for retiring board members, but then opted to strengthen the two-tier structure of an Association that appoints the Board and reviews appointments annually.
- Having at least one country-based Board Member where GL registers subsidiaries.
- Executive directors in the Francophone and Lusophone offices, to give the muscle and drive required to these language blocks, as well as create strong linkages with the predominantly English speaking countries in SADC.



Against this background, GL appointed four new Board Members in 2011/2012: Rethabile Pholo (Lesotho); Emily Brown (Namibia); Sara Longwe (Zambia) and Benedict Bennett (Swaziland). Ruth Ayisi resigned from the Board, but remains a member of the Association. I thank her on behalf of the Board for her excellent service.



Going green: Board Members Eduardo Namburete and Sara Longwe plant trees at the GL office on Earth Day in Johannesburg. Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

As reflected in the brief Board profiles (page 7 and 8) GL now has 12 board members from ten SADC countries. Four out of twelve or 33% are men; this is an improvement on the past and in response to concerns raised in the ten year evaluation. The Board bring to GL a range of backgrounds and skills including media; law; academia; international diplomacy; activism and electoral commissions. The GL Board also has representatives of all the three major language groups of SADC.

The Executive Committee

Exco held four meetings- June, August and November (2010) and February (2011). Exco held one extraordinary meeting in July to address an urgent staff/legal matter. Exco referred two matters to the full Board in November and February - new Board members and the Association; as well as roles and responsibilities of country-based board members. The Chairperson visited GL offices in August and met staff as well as senior managers. Exco and the CEO took forward several other matters by E Mail.

Key governance and institutional outcomes include:

- Rationalisation of all GL entities so that they are accountable to the parent body.
- Four new Board Members; registration of GL in eight countries as well as Terms of Reference and report format for country-based Board Members.
- Oversight of finances and donor matters; fund raising plan and successful raising of funds in three countries - Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique with good prospects in Zambia, Botswana and Lesotho.
- Several donor and fund raising related matters.

Strengthening corporate governance

Guided by the principle that good governance must begin at home, the Board took several measures to strengthen transparency and accountability:

- As required by the Companies Act of South Africa, we have drafted a new Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) and this is accompanied by Board Regulations.
- We have adopted a Conflict of Interest Policy included in GL's Policies and Regulations.
- We have subscribed to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) that requires us to post our income and expenditure on the IATI website every quarter.
- GL now has a Green Policy that we seek to mainstream in the way we work as well as our programme work in much the same way as our HIV and AIDS policies as well as our gender policy.

I take this opportunity to thank our partners, the Staff and Board of Gender Links for their tireless work over the last year. Work never betrays the worker. The fruits of our labour will be felt - in a better life for the women and men, boys and girls of our region.

2015: *Yes we must!*

Yes we must - *the time is now!*

Dr Muna Ndulo
Chairperson

