

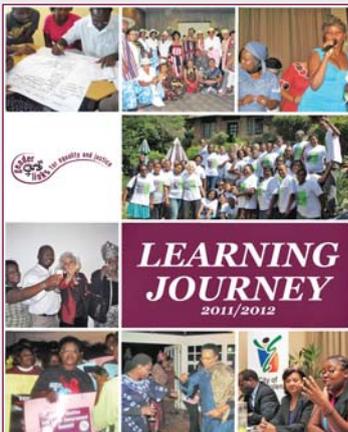
# INSTITUTIONAL

## Institutional effectiveness



Team work makes the dream work!

Photo: Trevor Davies



“What would a learning organisation look like if the people inside the organisation did not learn? This is the question that GL asked itself three years ago when we began this annual reflection exercise. Like any form of writing, the *Learning Journey* often meets - at least initially - with the resistance of another task, another deliverable. Yet after the writing is done, many staff attest to the power of reflection as part of growth. One staff member remarked that as GL we have invented and honed the art of “I” Stories - first hand accounts of difficult experiences - and popularised the concept of “healing through writing.” The Learning Journey is GL’s own “healing through writing.” Once a year we relive the high points and the low points. We ask what these have taught us. We build these into organisational learning. Each year, the journey probes a little deeper into our experiences. This year we deliberately sought to share our mistakes and probe what these have taught us. We make the point that to err is human, but to fail to learn is costly and stifling to personal development.”

- Read more on <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/results-learning>

# INFRASTRUCTURE

By Mpumelelo Mlilo ~ Country Operations Manager, and Tinashe Padare ~ IT Officer



Mpumelelo Mlilo



Tinashe Padare

## Information technology

Information Technology hit groundbreaking records over the past few years. The invention of faster bandwidth speed and social networking platforms through smart phone technology has made it easier for people to connect. This afforded businesses the opportunity to reach a wider network than before. IT professionals perform a variety of duties that range from installing applications to designing complex computer networks and information databases. With constant change, updates and newer versions of

software/hardware being released literally every week, organisations worldwide are continuously asking themselves the same questions “are our systems up-to-date?”

## Digitising data

Gender Links has responded to the ever-changing IT environment by implementing a number of systems to keep abreast with new developments. Donors have also been moving with the technology. They require grantees to publish their information in tech savvy ways that makes the presentations more interesting and contributes to sustainable environmental practices.

GL staff attended the Pan African Conference on Access to Information held in Cape Town in September 2011 under the Africa Media Summit. The conference put GL in touch with the suppliers in South Africa of CAT DV. This system enables GL’s raw institutional footage to be digitised and archived on a dedicated server together with GL’s photo gallery. This acts as an online library for all footage and photos making them easily accessible to users. CATDV allows us to create documentaries by combining footage and images from different places and eras that GL has collected over the years. The table below illustrates some advantages of using the CATDV system. More on this can also be found under the GMDC report.

Function	Old storage system	CAT DV
Storage mechanism	Tapes, video cassettes, CDs	Digital
Data back up	Same mechanism as initial mode	Compressed and stored in digital format
Storage space	Requires cupboards, drawers	Digital and back up on simple hard drives
Access of data	Limited to local users only	Worldwide through being searchable via internet
Searching data	Referencing in a long continuous data	Tagging of data and searches of large amounts of data using keywords
Functionality	Only for videos	Can extract “stills” from video
Access of data	Play the whole tape, cd	Use of an interactive Graphic User Interface
Viewing method	One data set at a time	Allows multiple viewing of data
Format of data	Analogue and digital	Digital only

## Social media platforms

GL opened facebook and twitter accounts that have been useful in sharing information and obtaining feedback from users across the world. This allows us to understand the impact of our programmes on the society, which in turn feeds back into programme design to suit the needs of the beneficiaries. This complements the cyber dialogues system where we have users logging on at the same time to set topics. Statistics have shown that the followers and site hits on GL’s social network platforms have increased over the year and we will continue to make use of these platforms to debate important burning issues and to announce upcoming events and campaigns.



### Working across borders

The VPN enables staff to access the public shared drives from anywhere. The web-based GL Intranet provides a platform to share internal regulations, forms and features and monthly events and news like birthdays.

GL's geographical spread (offices in ten countries), a software package called Teamviewer has been implemented for IT staff to support users remotely. It allows the setup of e-mail accounts, updating anti viruses and any technical assistance that would be required by the users operating away from the regional office.



Tinashe Padare won the 2012 staff award for innovation held at the Gender Links Cottages. Photo: Trevor Davies

### Cost savings

There are huge costs attached to all these technological improvements. Gender Links has tried to minimise costs by sourcing donations and discounts. An example is when we managed to save R100,000 on the MS Office licenses for all users through the Microsoft Donations Policy accessed through Sangotech. By employing a full time IT Officer, GL has managed to save up to 70% on the expenses of using an IT Specialist for support. Through the establishment of the help desk, the IT Officer has been able to analyse the most common IT problems which has informed staff training therefore reducing the number of queries that requires the IT staff's attention.

Gender Links IT systems have with improved and will continue to do so in the coming years to ensure that the latest, most innovative communication and data storage technologies are in place to increase the organisation's visibility and effectiveness.

### Physical infrastructure

In March 2011, GL acquired GL Cottages, a big investment and a completely new area for an NGO. GL Cottages is a bed and breakfast, which at maximum can accommodate 50 guests sharing. GL invested heavily in this proud three star facility.

The GL Cottages offers good facilities for training, workshops, and conferencing. The environment is conducive, quiet, and serene. It has become popular with organisations that have used it who keep coming again. The GL Cottages also accommodates some of our interns and staff at competitive prices. GL strives to create a comfortable, healthy, and safe environment for its staff.

The GL head office is housed in two properties. As staff component grows, office space becomes a challenge. We make sure everyone in their office space is comfortable.

The two GL guest rooms at head office continue to be another way of cost cutting. They provide accommodation for satellite staff and field staff who come for meetings at head office. Staff who have been recruited and are still finding accommodation, they are accommodated for an agreed period of time. Sometimes consultants are housed in the guest rooms and this reduces on the transport and accommo-dations costs for GL.

The air conditioned GL training room can accommodate 30 participants. This is used mainly for GL in house training. GL plans to advertise the room to external organisations as a training venue. The lapa and swimming pool area are used for GL entertainment as well as lunches for training participants. The grounds are always kept in a good condition by the gardener. There are on-going office repairs, painting to keep GL offices looking clean, professional and in good condition.



GL staff toast to news of a grant from the Netherlands government in the New Wing. Photo: Tinashe Padare

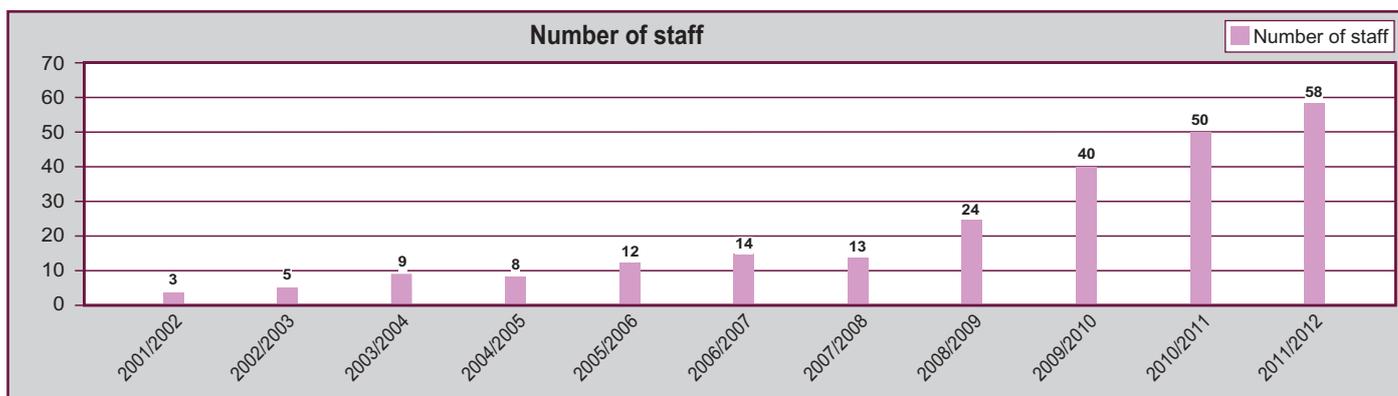
# HUMAN RESOURCES

By Vivian Bakainaga ~ Human Resources and Asset Manager

GL is expanding its footprints to other countries with the registration of country offices in Lesotho, Namibia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Country facilitators have become Country Managers, and interns have (in some instances) become programme assistants and officers. This increased GL's staff component from 50 to 58, a 16% growth. There is still need to recruit more staff as the countries start to access local funding and growth in programme work. In addition, GL acquired GL Cottages, which employs 10 staff members.



Walking the talk: GL Human Resources Manager Vivian Bakainanga (right) and GL Services Manager Mukayi Makaya. Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna



The figure above shows that GL staff base grew from 2009 and has continued to grow rapidly over the three years.

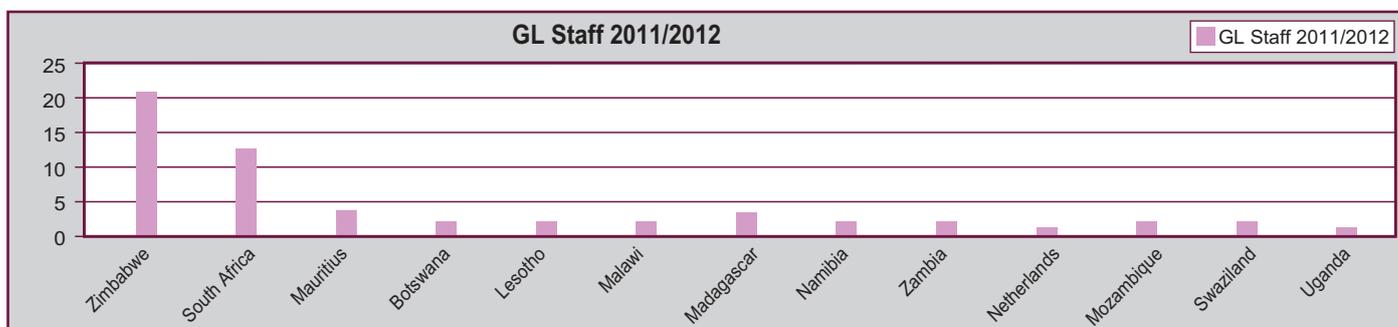
	2010/2011		2011/2012	
Women	40	80%	41	70%
Men	10	20%	17	30%

Gender Links continues to promote gender equality in its recruitment policies. The table above shows a 10% improvement over last year in gender balance from 20%

to 30%. This is largely due to the promotion of a number of country M and E interns to programme assistants. The programme assistants are mostly young energetic men who are passionate about gender issues. The newly recruited Knowledge and Training manager increases the number of men on the management team to two out of ten or 20%.

### Staff origin

GL has a diverse staff component from 13 countries, 55 from SADC region, one from East Africa (Uganda), one from Europe (Netherlands).



### Staff retention

GL has a young staff compliment with an average age of 34 years. As can be seen from the first graph, GL Staff have tripled over the last five years. The average length of service, excluding interns, is three years which is

commendable given that the institution has only built up to its current complement over the last five years. While there was some staff instability on the earlier years, especially given the uncertainty of project funding, this has begun to stabilise. In the last year, GL lost five staff;

this is a turnover of 8%. A 7-10% staff turnover is regarded as normal and necessary for creating room for growth at different levels within the institution.

GL has taken a number of extraordinary measures to retain staff: for example the manager of the governance programme, GL's largest, works from Cape Town to be close to family so that she can juggle her work, that involves travel, with raising a baby. One staff member left work for government and returned citing the lack of a motivating environment.

### Second home: Why I came back to GL

Goodness: where do I even begin writing this learning journey? I have been through so much with GL. I think I probably hold the record for the number of times an individual has resigned and returned to an organisation!

My journey at GL began on the 1 March 2010; quite an introduction indeed, amidst the first Gender Justice and Local Government Summit. I soon settled in at GL and felt comfortable, but then I got homesick and wanted to return to Cape Town. GL CEO Colleen Lowe Morna agreed for me to work for GL from Cape Town, and did her best to ensure my happiness. Then I found love and changed my mind and I decided to stay in Johannesburg.

I found myself developing into a facilitator for the Centres of Excellence (COE's); a writer doing commentary pieces and also established a good relationship with many local councils and people that I worked with. But I also faced many challenges: the governance manager went on maternity leave and South Africa had local government elections; this interfered with the COE work. I worked with the CEO on a gender audit of the elections. Goodness that was a very trying time indeed but I realised how much I had grown as a person. I had become well versed in local government issues. I proudly gave interviews to newspapers and radio stations on the research and realised that GL is a powerhouse indeed.

Then I dropped the "second bombshell". I resigned at the end of May 2011 to pursue a career in the private sector. I served my notice, and said a sad farewell in August as I had built such amazing relationships with everyone. My

GL took the staff member back as her post was still vacant and she had served well. She brought back interesting and critical insights for younger staff. GL's former editor, who had to relocate to Canada for personal reasons, continues to edit for GL on an ad hoc consultancy basis. GL makes use of IT to promote flexible working arrangements. However, attracting and retaining qualified staff is an on going challenge. GL has instituted a system of exit interviews to help improve practise in this area.

colleagues had become my family. We would have soup day on those cold winter days. People knew when I was having a bad day aka "crappy day"; everyone knew of my DM flashes aka "Diva Moments" when I would throw my tantrums. But they also knew how much I loved all of them and I also knew how much they loved me too. However, I also wanted to establish myself and perhaps seek another dimension to my career.



Ntombi Mbadlanyana

In January 2012 I returned briefly for a six month consultancy when barely a week later I dropped the "third bomb". I got a job at the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and I left GL once again. But soon after I started work at the DTI in February 2012 I realised I am no longer geared up to being a public servant and resigned after a my one month stint.

I am returning to GL once again. GL CEO Colleen Lowe Morna has dubbed me the "Prodigal Daughter". This time I will stay anchored for a while. Throughout this journey I have realised that GL is not only a workplace but a second home to me. This is the one place where I have really discovered things about myself and have been afforded endless opportunities to grow as individual. So my new learning journey commences again and I am really excited of what lies ahead this time around. -Ntombi Mbadlanyana, Country Manager, Gender Justice and Local Government, South Africa.

### Staff capacity building

GL offers a platform for staff to develop their skills and realise their potential. Staff are exposed to all the processes within the organisation which improves individual growth. As a result staff have become more adept at organising themselves, managing projects and managing staff which has been attested in many staff learning journeys. This is part of the on the job training and when coupled with the skills can contribute to the individual's advancement. In its own training work, especially through the media and governance COE's, GL promotes on-the-job learning. GL has sought to promote a similar culture within its own work place. Staff attended the following short courses in the past year (a combination of on site and off site; external consultants and GL senior managers).

- All GL staff both head office and field staff were trained in the MSWord 2010 covering all the programmes including MS Word, Excel, Publisher and Power Point.
- Some programme staff were trained in advance publisher and they are now able to do their newsletters confidently without seeking outside service providers. As a result of this training GL is now producing its own business cards in-house.
- Finance staff attended a Pastel training course for two days to equip them on pastel payroll programme.
- The Director of Corporate services attended a workshop on Directors Duties Workshop to understand the provisions of the new South African Companies Act.

- The COO has conducted an M and E course.
- Programme officers attended the Media Literacy as part of the GL-Lovelife collaboration.
- The CEO has conducted an information management;

two writing skills training workshops and an analysis and writing workshop for managers. The CEO is designing a four module Country Managers course that will be dovetailed to planning visits to Johannesburg.

COURSE/TRAINING	DATE TRAINED	NO. OF STAFF TRAINED	BY WHO
MS Word training	19th October 2011	8	External consultants
MS Word training	20th October 2011	9	
MS Word Publisher	31st October 2011	11	
MS Word and information management training	16th November 2011	10	
MS Word Power Point	13th December 2011	20(Field staff & HQ)	
Pastel Pay roll	23 August 2011	2	
Monitoring and Evaluation	13 December	30	COO
Directors Duties Workshop	16 March 2012	1	Off site
Media Literacy Course	Feb to June - GL staff joining Love Life	4	COO, GMDC manager
Writing workshops	November, March	16	CEO
Analytical thinking and writing - managers	18 February	10	
Country Managers - Information Management, Conceptual and Strategic Skills	18-20 April	11	
M and E, audio visual, website	27 February to 5 May	9 Field assistants	
			External consultants, COO

### Organisational learning

GL has produced three key in-house manuals: Communication and Writing; Monitoring and Evaluation; Finance and Administration. Each year GL conducts a personal and organisational learning reflection exercise that will be launched at Staff Awards on 26 April. GL has been actively involved in learning groups set up by the DFID PPA fund. These include inclusion; results, accountability monitoring and evaluation as well as strengthening institutional practice (GL's three senior managers are involved in different streams). GL leads the gender sub-group of the inclusion group. GL is leading a discussion on gender mainstreaming that is critical for finalising GL's theory of change. Many staff participate in the GMDC seminar series. This is elaborated in greater detail in the results section of the report.

### Staff awards

GL introduced staff awards in 2010. These awards have gone a long way in affirming good performance and motivating others to do better. The table reflects the different staff award categories and winners in 2012.

### Wellness

The wellness activities have made a huge impact because teamwork and health really matter at GL workplace. As the staff component grows, it is important to create a healthy team. The HR manager coordinates the wellness programme with the support of the deputy chairperson - Scholastica Kimaryo, a certified Chopra instructor.

The satellite and field offices are included in the wellness programme and they choose what activities to get involved in. At times staff at head office have got together at lunch time to share a meal and discuss interesting topic. On few occasions one staff member made nice soup for all. GL staff enjoy celebrating Staff and Board members

	AWARDS	STAFF NAMES
1	Team Player HQ Staff	Clever Zulu
2	Team Player SO/FO	Marie-Josée Coopan
3	Team Player Manager	Abigail Jacobs-Williams
4	Team player GL Cottages	Siyabonga Phungula
5	Innovation Staff	Tinashe Padare
6	Innovation Field Staff	Botswana Office Keabonye Ntsabane and Roos van Dorp
7	Innovation Management	Shuvai Nyoni
8	Resource Mobilisation Field Staff	Priscilla Maposa
9	Resource Mobilisation Manager	Mukayi Makaya
10	Resource Mobilisation Manager	Loveness Jambaya
11	Financial Administration	Ialfine Papisy
12	Writing staff	Lucia Makamure
13	Writing Manager	Saeanna Chingamuka
14	Monitoring and Evaluation	Ntolo Lekau
15	Photography	Vincent Galatlhwe
16	Photography	Zotonantenaina Razanadratafa
17	GL Services Manager's Award for Service Culture	Sally Makhudu
18	GL CEO's staff award	Albert Ngosa
19	Excellent Performance Field Staff	Ialfine Papisy
20	Excellent Performance Field Staff	Sarry Xoagus-Eises
21	Improved performance staff	Daud Kayisi
22	Improved performance field staff	Faides Nsofu
23	Improved performance field staff	Keabonye Ntsabane
24	Exceptional Performance	Bridget Marango

birthdays. An Intranet has been introduced for staff to interact and post messages which enhance communication and team spirit.

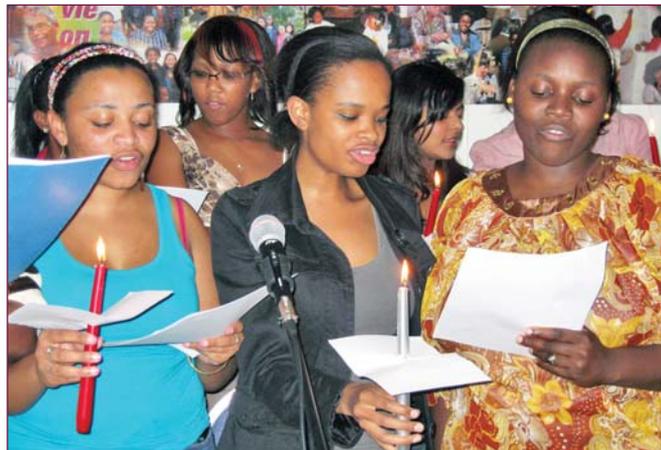
Board members have been part of the wellness activities whenever they are present. A wellness activity is usually

organised during a board meeting or planning meeting and everyone actively participates.

At GL we believe that family is an integral part of GL staff and part of one's wellbeing and we organise activities that are family-oriented such as visits to the zoo, botanical garden and walks that culminate in dinner or picnic. Singing promotes joy; relaxation and team work. GL staged musical performances in Botswana and at the Gender Justice and Media Summit that coincided with GL's tenth anniversary.

Wellness has not only been about GL staff but also about giving back to the community. Staff at head office took part in Mandela day where they were distributing food to the disadvantaged children. At satellite and field offices in Lesotho groceries were distributed to disadvantaged families. The Botswana office organised other institutions

to contribute blankets, warm clothes and soup day for disadvantaged communities



Singing to the same tune: The GL choir promotes team spirit, Johannesburg, South Africa.  
Photo: Trevor Davies

### The deeper journey to self-discovery

Today, medical doctors are increasingly citing stress -- whatever the causes of it: work, home, socio-economic and/or political environments -- as a major contributing factor to under-performance and most illness. Our bodies and minds react to stress by shifting out of balance, which ultimately creates physical challenges and emotional turbulence that impact our lives at home, at work and at play.

In time, we can find ourselves in toxic relationships as well as non-nourishing patterns of eating, sleeping, digestion, low energy levels, lower productivity as well as antagonistic relationships at home and at work. The Perfect Health Course offers a five-step exploration of mind-body medicine and Ayurveda.

The Gender Links Board made a decision to engage my services as a Chopra Centre University Certified Instructor in Conscious Leadership and Ayurvedic Perfect Health in 2010/2011. This followed feedback from Gender Links Staff and Managers, demonstrating high levels of commitment and productivity - resulting in Gender Links winning several prestigious Awards for Excellence - but also indicated worrying levels of staff anxiety bordering in a few instances on burn out.

The five part-training course conducted monthly on Friday afternoons served as an introduction to related concepts, knowledge and tools for the enhancement of the health and well-being of staff, as well as improved productivity and higher morale among. However, the real work must be undertaken by each individual.



Scholastica Kimaryo launches the 2011 GL Learning Journey.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

The pressure from donors to "do more for less" exacts a heavy toll on NGOs. What is required is the formulation of creative, non-traditional ways of structuring the organisation. A common trend is to have fewer, more experienced staff/experts in their field, with innovative, "outsourcing" for specific functions. I am impressed by the creativity and flexibility already demonstrated by the Gender Links CEO and Management, in birthing new ideas regarding how best to get the work done, with fewer Staff and with better results; as is evidenced in some of the 2011 Annual Reports and other Board Documents.

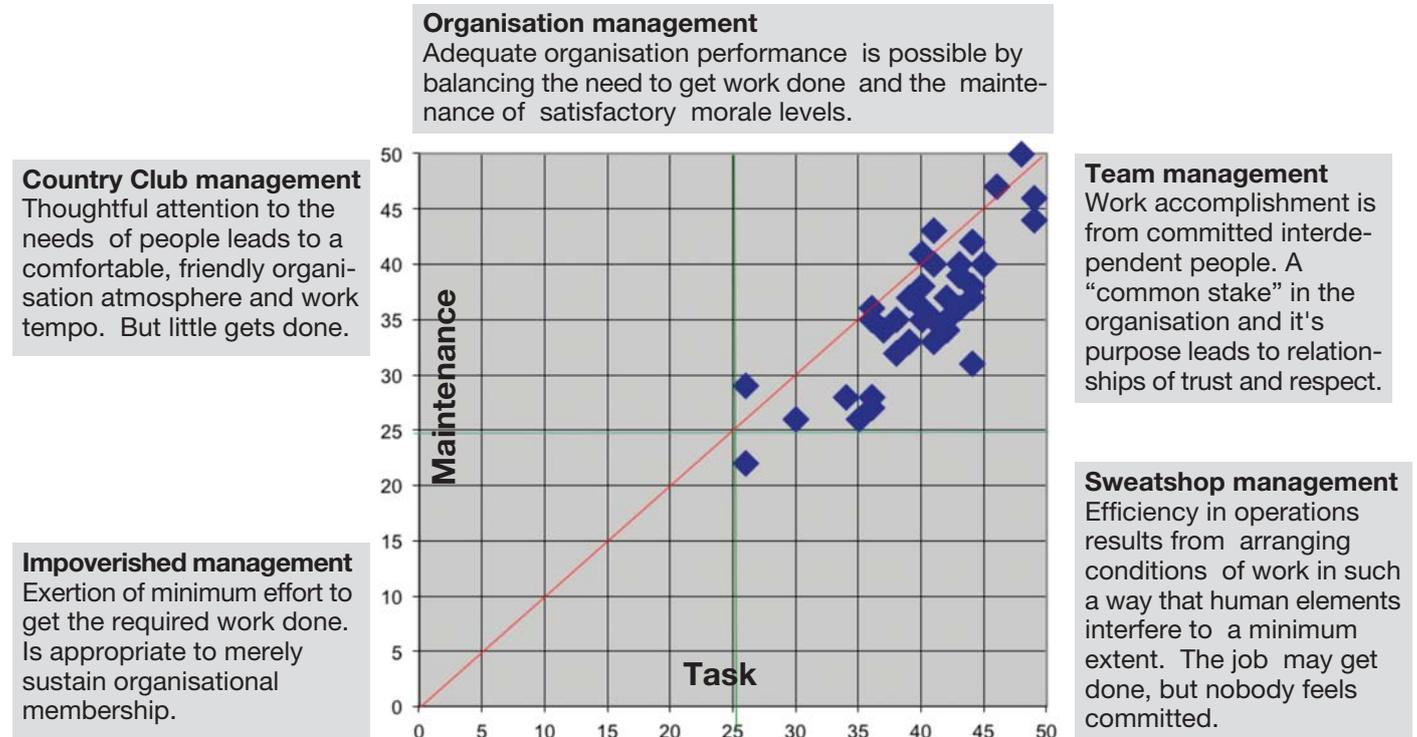
- Scholastica Sylvan Kimaryo, Deputy Chair, Founder & CEO, Maadili Conscious Leadership & Healthy Lifestyles Coaching

## Gender Links team assessment

In December 2010 as part of the overall human resource evaluation that takes place at this time, GL administered the Blake and Mouton team assessment questionnaire.

This questionnaire assesses the balance between task and maintenance in the work place. The results, and explanation of each quadrant are reflected below in the graphic.

## Summary of GL team assessment scores



With one exception, GL staff all fall within the "winning team" quadrant. Management need to interrogate the few instances of those who are not pulling together with the rest of the team. A disaggregation of the results shows that key stress points are in our country operations. This is understandable as these staff have limited support and infrastructure, and travel long distances. GL's efforts to beef up country operations should help to address these concerns.

The graph compares GL team scores between 2010 and 2011. It shows that:

- In both years GL scored highest on task (80% and 79%); next on creativity and innovation (77% and 76%) and third maintenance (72% and 67%).
- What is significant is the increase in the maintenance score from 67% to 72%, a 5% point improvement. This reflects the greater attention given to staff welfare over the last year, especially the Perfect Health Wellness series run by the Deputy Chair. As the team matures, staff understand one another better, care for each other more and have built healthy working relationships with each other and are keen to work together to achieve the organisation's goals. This is important for any organisation. This year (please see Learning Journey) there have been many accidents and casualties. The fact that the mainte-

nance score has increased reflects that there has also been a commensurate increase in caring.

- A 1% point increase on creativity and innovation also indicates that in understanding their work and position within the organisation, staff are given more leeway to be creative and introduce new or better ways of doing things. The 1% point increase in task may be as a result of GL's constant growth and the pressure on all staff particularly managers and field staff to contribute to fundraising and sourcing in kind support in order for GL to remain sustainable.

