

# LESOTHO



Mantebheleng Mabetha - Country Manager



Ntolo Lekau



Fuzakazi Mqungwana

Country	Lesotho
Board Member	Rethabile Pholo
Staff Members	Mantebheleng Mabetha, Ntolo Lekau and Fuzakazi Mqungwana
When registered	February 2011
Alliance focal network	Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA-Lesotho)
Government COEs	40
Media COE's	8
Key partners	Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship, Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA), EU, UNFPA, UNDP, Irish Aid, Lesotho Council of NGOs.

## Protocol@Work Summit facts

- 109 participants - 72 female, 37 male.
- 62 entries - 46 women and 16 men from ten categories.
- One man and two women runner ups, ten female and two male winners.
- Organisations were represented: 20 civil society, eight councils, four media houses, one government ministry and one donor.
- Entries were called in from all the ten districts of the country. These covered good practices from different categories: Local government COEs, Women's Rights, Gender Based Violence, Climate Change, Leadership, Alliance and Coalition Building, 50/50, Government Ministry, Media - Print, TV and Radio.

In 2014, GL Lesotho continued to make strides toward gender equality and continued to leave giant footsteps across the country. GL Lesotho held two district summits for the local government Centres of Excellence (COEs). The national summit was a great success event that was attended by over one hundred people from all over the country.

## Background

GL registered its Lesotho office in Maseru in February 2011. The mandate of the office is to implement all the stages of

the Centres of Excellence which is a project aimed at local government councils to ensure gender is mainstreamed from the grassroots level. Initiatives have been taken to ensure that local authorities and various women's groups engage further with issues of equality, gender based violence, women in politics and gender in the media.

## Key achievements

- In March 2014, GL Lesotho held its first district level summits for the local government COE's. Twenty-eight COE councils attended the district summits and eight of them proceeded to the National summit. Three councils made it to the Regional Summit in Johannesburg, where one council won a runner-up award.
- GL Lesotho established ten more government COEs in 2014 working in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation. This increased the total number of COEs to 40.
- Twelve new councils have developed their gender action plans and have completed stages one to eight of the COE process.
- GL is also expanding the work on economic justice through the entrepreneurship programme which aims to empower women survivors of gender violence. In 2014, five more councils became part of the entrepreneurship training and this brought the total number of councils taking part in this programme to ten. Two-hundred women survivors from these councils completed training in phase one and phase two.

- Four councils involved in the entrepreneurship training completed phase three and have revised their GBV action plans to align them with the results of the GBV Indicators Study.
- There were six village level workshops held and a total of 1200 monitoring and evaluation forms were administered and uploaded online.

- A considerable number of media COEs managed to complete many stages up to gender policy development, including those that were introduced to the process for the first time.

### A passion for gender equality in the council work

By *Thato Mokuena*

I work at the Senekane Local Council. I oversee a number of departments, including road construction, water services, health sector service, and markets in my council. I ensure that the allocations of jobs is done in accordance with principles of gender equality. If there is a job which needs to be done, I draw up a list of the names. Then I find out how many are female and how many are male. Then I allocate an equal number of both sexes to the job. When I am dealing with the tendering process, I apply the same principle. We get construction and catering tenders, and we focus on gender when we allocate these in the council.

I have seen great changes in men. In the past, men thought that as the head of the family, they were the only ones who were supposed to take up formal employment. However, they have come to understand that women can take up formal employment too. I have seen that men now understand that if women are empowered, it does not mean that men's position will be compromised. In the past, many men believed that women wanted to undermine their authority. Now, they are starting to see that all jobs can be shared and done equally by men and women. My council has changed how they do things. They used to think that only men could work in the donga or in construction, but now women are taking part in construction, and men are taking part in catering.

I believe that women should be more empowered. My own attitude has changed, because now I can see the impact of women in decision making positions, even though they are not many women leaders. At the community level, I facilitate public gatherings for local council meetings, and I always try to tell people about the SADC Gender Protocol.

Gender Links has taught me a lot of things which I never knew to be part of my job within the council. I was taught about climate change, IT and gender budgeting, in addition



Thato Mokuena - Councillor in Senkane, Lesotho.

Photo: Gender Links

to gender equality and justice. These have greatly changed how I work in my professional and personal life. There are many skills that I have gained working with GL. For example, the cyber dialogues have enabled me to network with other organisations. I enjoyed the cyber dialogue during the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign. I could chat with many people about gender and we ended up networking. I have also been trained as part of their training of trainers. I have attended and participated in the summits and in 2014 I competed for the women's rights award.

The person who had really driven this change in me was Malepota Mafeka, former GL Lesotho Country Manager, who has now passed on. She was the person who trained and worked with us in the council. Whenever we had any issues with gender, we would go to her. Working with Ntolo Lekau has also been fruitful and we continue to fight for gender equality and justice in the council and community at large.

### Key challenges

- Councillors' low literacy levels delay the completion of the COE process, as it takes a long time for them to understand and commit to the processes.
- There is no memorandum of understanding between GL and the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship. This often hampers the COE work, especially where there is need for central government to intervene.
- Councils do not have budgets dedicated for gender

activities. The Ministry dictates council budgets, and therefore slows progress of gender mainstreaming activities.

- The Ministry of Communication has not yet signed the memorandum of understanding give a go ahead on the implementation of the media project, because political challenges continue to affect the highest authority in the Ministry.
- Many of the media houses, particularly print media, are less able to commit to the COE initiative and training

due to tight deadlines and very busy newsrooms. There is also a misguided unwillingness among media houses who believe that gender responsive content does little for their listenership and/or readership, thus do not see the COE process as worthwhile.

#### Lessons learnt in 2014

- It is very important to strengthen the partnership with the Ministry of Gender as this helps GL to encourage government ownership of gender mainstreaming and to multiply their efforts to more councils.
- Signing MOUs with the Ministries really helps to ensure implementation of the COE process and sustainability of collaboration between GL and local government.

#### Key priorities for 2015

- Hold two district summits and a National Summit.
- Introduce the COE process to 20 new councils to bring the total up to 60. Ten of these councils should be trained by the Principal District Gender Officers.
- Follow up on the signing of MOUs with the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Communications.
- Launch the Lesotho GBV Indicators Study and ensure at least 20 councils develop GBV action plans.
- Complete phase three of the entrepreneurship training in six councils.
- Conduct the repeat "I" Stories workshop in order to monitor the degree of change following the entrepreneurship training of 200 women survivors of violence.

#### Peace restored, but where are the women?

By Rethabile Pholo, Board Member



Lesotho is breathing more easily after the political crisis in 2014 that almost resulted in a coup. Early elections restored democracy, but women are still glaringly missing from political decision-making in the last election before the 2015 SADC Gender Protocol deadline for gender parity.

In June 2014, Prime Minister Thomas Thabane suspended parliament because of conflict within his coalition, leading to criticisms that he was undermining the government. In August, after Thabane attempted to remove Lieutenant General Kennedy Tlali Kamoli from the head of the army, the Prime Minister fled the country alleging a coup was taking place. South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, on behalf of SADC troika, went to Maseru to pursue a regional mandate to help restore peace, stability and democracy to the country. The threats of coups and political rivalry are not uncommon to the Lesotho Kingdom and the country has experienced instability for the last few decades.

Even though Lesotho is said to be amongst the countries in the world that have made significant progress toward achieving gender equality this does not seem to be the case when it comes to women in politics. In the 2012 national elections there were very few women candidates contesting constituency seats. In order to address this worrying state of affairs, in 2011 during review of the National Assembly Electoral Act 1992, the Commission came up with a provision that mandated political parties to ensure their proportional representation (PR) lists included an equal number of women and men and were zebra-style. These provisions made a significant difference in the 8th Parliament as the number of women increased more than ever before. At 49%, Lesotho still holds the record for women's representation in local government, down from 58% in the 2006 elections.

The 2015 elections were held on 28 February, more than two years ahead of schedule due to the 2014 political crisis. Following mediation facilitated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), King Letsie on the advice of the Prime Minister Tom Thabane, dissolved the Eighth Parliament.

Since the zebra-style requirement applies only to the proportional representation component of Parliament, women are still a significant minority among the constituency candidates. Of the 1,116 constituency candidates in the 2015 elections, only 30% were women.

The Lesotho parliament comprises 120 seats. 80 are filled on a First Past the Post (FPTP) basis. The remaining 40 seats are distributed among parties on a Proportional Representation (PR) basis. The Electoral Law requires that women be equally represented in the PR seats, but not the FPTP seats. Nine women and 71 men won constituencies. Women won a further 21 seats in the Proportional Representation seats, giving a total of 30 women out of 120 or 25%, compared to 26% prior to these elections. Five women lead ministries out of a total of 26 (20%), compared to 22% before. Lesotho has missed the 2015 deadline and now has to re-position for the post 2015 agenda.



ABC supporters at a rally.

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