



## OVERVIEW

By Loga Virahsawmy, Director, Francophone office



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In September 2008 when the Mauritius Satellite Office opened as a non-profit Foreign Company, little did I realise that the octopus will throw its tentacles in other Francophone countries. The tentacles are there to stay!

The two offices in Mauritius and Madagascar are registered and fully functional. Both countries implement and support all of GL's two major programmes with particular focus on the COE's for gender in local government and the media.

The Mauritian Satellite Office as the "elder sister" tries its best to look after and care for the "little sister" Madagascar (although Madagascar is nothing to compare with Mauritius in size!). The Francophone headquarters in Mauritius provides strategic guidance and technical support to programmes in Madagascar. As in the case of the first Local Government and Gender Justice Summit in Madagascar, the Francophone Director travelled there to guide and support the event. Events during the Summit revealed that GL is well known and respected in Madagascar.

The Madagascar Country Manager, Ialfine Tracoulat, is doing a great job but morale, psychological, and physical support from either Mauritius or GL HQ helps to boost and maintain staff morale.

Funders and the localities that GL works with like to meet senior members of staff from GL. Some localities expressed their wish for the Francophone Director to visit them and get a good understanding of their localities in order to appreciate the difficult conditions within which they work.

Although GL does not have a country facilitator in DRC, UCOFEM, the main partner of GL, and HAM, another partner, are very active. UCOFEM is so active that they use the training received from GL to get their own funding and do media monitoring.

As low income and post conflict countries both Madagascar and DRC have better chances of getting funding. In both countries, funders prefer to work with NGOs than the government, which is opposite to Mauritius. Mauritius, however, is big on in-kind support. The Mauritius office seldom pays for venues. Ministers fund all the Women in Politics Workshops including transport for participants, catering and in some cases accommodation for GL facilitators.

Having worked in both countries, I believe GL can help UCOFEM even more in preparing projects for funding. UCOFEM got its own funding to do in-depth monitoring on Gender and the Media during the Presidential and General elections of 2012. UCOFEM and GL both receive DFID funding. UCOFEM used guidelines from GL's Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) to do the monitoring. The report, launched in May 2012, can be accessed on [http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?g2\\_itemId=19994](http://gemcommunity.genderlinks.org.za/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=19994). GL is in the process of signing an MOU with UCOFEM covering various facets of our work in the DRC, especially the media COE's and the DRC Barometer. UCOFEM will be invited to join the GMDC and to collaborate with GL in preparation for the Gender Justice Summit in 2013.

### Reconnecting with Seychelles

Although, like Mauritius, Seychelles is technically not a Francophone country, it has Francophone roots and connections, and is geographically close to Mauritius. Over time GL has had a long and productive relationship with the island. GL helped to found GEM Plus, the gender and media network that has anchored several of our gender and media studies on the island. In 2011, GL worked closely with the Gender Unit in Seychelles in aligning its Gender Policy and Action Plan to the SADC Gender Protocol. GL has had discussions with the new Media Council in Seychelles on a gender aware Code of Ethics, and will soon work with GEM Plus in offering gender and media literacy. GEM Plus will also help mobilise for the Gender Justice Summit. As Seychelles (like Malawi) does not presently have elected local government, GL's programme work in Seychelles continues to focus mostly on the media. GL will also offer support to the Gender Unit in the implementation of the National Gender Action Plan.



"It's exciting to be starting the year on such a positive note and we shall continue to work hard on refining the Policy and developing the Plan of Action further. I am sure the launching will be good fun with a real Creole flair! We managed to do quite a bit more work when you left on Thursday, although we still didn't finish the security section in my group! Some groups are still working on their bits of the Plan of Action and I will take all this and consolidate with the seventh draft of the Policy to ensure all changes are reflected. Thank you again for all your kind assistance and hard work. It was a pleasure to watch you work, I learnt so much! - Tessa Siu, Head of Gender Unit, Seychelles