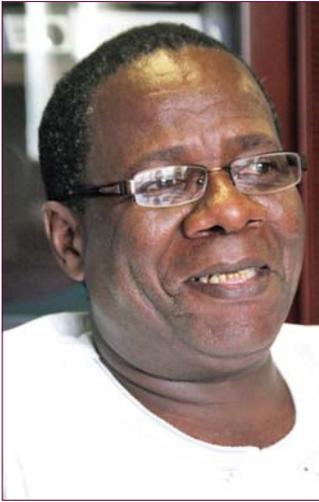




LESOTHO



Rethabile Pholo, Board Member



Manteboheleng Mabetha, Country Manager



Ntolo Lekau, Programme Officer



Fuzakazi Mqungwana, Finance Officer

FACT FILE

Country	Lesotho
Board Member	Rethabile Pholo
Staff Members	Manteboheleng Mabetha, Ntolo Lekau, Fuzakazi Mqungwana
When registered	1 st of February 2011
Alliance focal network	Women in Law Southern Africa - (WLSA - Lesotho)
Governance COE's	30
Media COE's	-
Key partners	Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation, Ministry of Local Government and Cheiftainship, WLSA, EU, UNFPA, UNDP, Irish Aid, Lesotho Council of NGOs

partners. Mphafi says GL changed his life as an individual and as a representative of the community, because now his awareness of gender issues as well as the women of his community inform his decisions.



Participants the Lesotho GJLG Summit 2013.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

As a councillor, he always reports to the community after every workshop he attends, in order to share knowledge and urge the community to put the information into practice. Mphafi has established a group of women and men, who work very closely with the Gender Protection Unit in Morija, to ensure that both the Unit and community work together to advance gender equality in the home, the workplace and on the streets.

Mphafi strongly believes that if people all work together, especially with traditional leaders, people will realise that gender equality is not about women being given the opportunity to disrespect men, but about the opportunity for all women and men to participate equally in all aspects of life.



Tsekiso Mphafi.

Tsekiso Mphafi is a councillor in Makhoarane. He knew very little about gender before 2012 when GL came to work with the Makhoarane council. Mphafi explains that before he attended the GL training he would never cook food, not even if his wife was sick, because he thought cooking was only for women.

He now appreciates the role of women, the importance of gender issues and encourages other men to respect their

With every passing year GL-Lesotho is growing from strength to strength. For the first time ever, we held a successful and well-attended SADC Gender Protocol@Work Summit. The Minister of Gender and Youth, Sport and Recreation Chief Thesele 'Maseribane was the guest speaker and it was heartening to see many male participants at the summit. The summit presented a great opportunity to improve men's participation in gender mainstreaming and empowering women.

Key achievements

- GL signed an MOU with the Ministry of Gender to cascade the Centres of Excellence (COE). This has helped GL and the Principal District Gender officers (PDGO) to establish 20 more COEs in 2013.
- Eight of the new councils have developed action plans, while the others have completed stages one to five of the COE process.
- Ten old COE councils attended the national summit and three winning councils participated in the Regional Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- Popularised the SADC Gender Protocol: most communities did not know that Lesotho had signed the Protocol.
- Lesotho successfully completed the GBV Indicators Study, following firm support from the Minister of Gender - Chief Thesele 'Maseribane. Ten PDGOs supervised the research after receiving laptops and IT training in June 2013.
- GL is also expanding the work on economic justice through a programme to empower women survivors of gender violence: 100 survivors from five COE councils were trained on phase one.
- 79 councillors and 100 survivors were part of the Sixteen Days of Activism planning and participated in the cyber dialogues.
- Gender and economic coverage training was also conducted through the office's media work.

Key challenges

- Low literacy levels of councillors creates delays in the completion of the COE process, as it takes a long time for them to understand the processes.
- COE councils are not autonomous and cannot make decisions without getting the Ministry's consent and approval.
- Councils do not have specific budgets for gender-related activities, the Ministry dictates council budgets, and thus delays gender mainstreaming activities.
- Kick starting the media work in Lesotho has remained slow: only eight media COEs have been formed since many media houses have declined on being part of the process.

Lessons learned

- It is very important to strengthen the partnership with the Ministry of Gender to multiply their efforts and to save money in order to reach more councils and communities.

Key priorities for 2014

- To decentralise the national summit, by holding district summits for the COE councils.

- Finalise action plans in the remaining councils.
- Introduce the COE process to ten new councils to bring the total to 40.
- Launch the GBV Indicators Study.
- Complete phase two of the entrepreneurship training in five councils and start phase one and two in five new councils.
- Popularise and speed up media COE work.
- Strengthen Alliance Network by joining the Lesotho Council of Non-Governmental Organisation.

Masello Moleleki was born in the district of Mokhotlong. People from her village used to mock her and some even threatened her because she was not behaving like a 'real' Mosotho woman. However, she did not let this get in the way of her dreams. Since her husband was working in the mines in South Africa, she had to take care of everything at home, including their family taxi business.

"I have always been a strong woman, but I would not be this strong and confident if it was not for Gender Links."

- Masello Moleleki



People believed that women could not drive and that taxi drivers are and should all be men. She subverted this belief and ignored all the ridicule by becoming a taxi driver. It was difficult for her because the community and other male taxi drivers were making her life difficult, but she persevered and eventually people started to respect her and saw Moleleki's potential.

She spent most of her time in the taxi rank and was able to learn more about the male dominated world. She became close to some of the male taxi drivers and started teaching them about the importance of women and their roles in the community, besides being mothers and housewives. In 2011, GL staff visited the organisation she started- Ratanang Basali which collects donations to improve the lives of women in the community. She then applied to be a participant of the national summit under the Economic Empowerment category. After winning the award she went to the Regional Summit in Johannesburg, where she learnt not only how to present and make a power point for the first time, but also gained so many new ideas from all the other participants from across the region.

After realising how she could positively influence the community, and considering how much respect she had garnered from people, she decided to become a councillor.

In 2011 she became councillor for Hlotse Urban and attended more training on gender issues so she could help inform and encourage change in her community. She explains that women and men are now better able to participate equally and understand the importance of gender equality.

Coping with the loss of a country manager

On Saturday 30 November 2013, the sun made its usual journey from the east, cutting slowly across the blue skies to the west where it eventually disappeared into the horizon. But this sunset heralded gloom and great sorrow. Gender Link Lesotho saw the unimaginable, least expected loss of our beloved Country Manager, Mme 'Malepota Ntsoaki Suzan Mafeka. She had been at the helm of our office for no more than three years and yet her achievements were incomparable and unmatched.

This was the first ever death within the Gender Links Family. It came as a great shock to all who knew and loved her; to all who brushed shoulders with her and to the Gender Links Country Managers, most of whom were devastated by Malepota's untimely passing.

In Lesotho, we felt especially distraught because a co-worker is like a member of an extended family. We spend most of our hours with them, forging special bonds of trust and friendship that are unlike our other relationships. It was no surprise then that the loss of Malepota has been very difficult to cope with. We were all very close to her and her death was so unexpected.

It became very difficult to focus on work for a while. This disrupted the functioning of the organisation. We became tense and irritable, adding to the usual stresses of work. For some of us, the overwhelming emotional response had

a negative influence on our physical health: deep sadness disrupted our eating and sleeping patterns, robbing us of the energy we needed to work and move on with our lives.

However, as painful as it was, and will be for a long time to come, grief is a natural process and mourning requires a lot of time to heal. We need to come to terms with the fact that our Country Manager, friend and family member is no more, though her memory will forever stay with us.

We see her behind her desk every morning and yet she is not there and the room is no longer filled with her contagious laughter. In everything we do, we hear her ever-so-sweet voice urging us to go on through thick and thin and so we soldier on to honour her memory.

We are a very small family at GL Lesotho, but our extended family is made up of Local Government Councillors and District Gender Officers. We share our feelings with these family members and this mutual support helps a great deal to go through the grieving process.



Malepota Ntsoaki Suzan Mafeka.

Photo: Trevor Davies

The support that we received from GL Headquarters and our sister offices in the SADC region served as a healing ointment to sooth our open wounds. The selflessness that our Chief Executive Officer and the GL Staff displayed during this time helped us to dedicate every fibre of our being to the exceptional send-off of our beloved 'Malepota. GL held a memorial service for staff, friends and family where they re-named a conference room in her honour. May her dear soul rest in eternal peace.

- Rethabile Pholo, Lesotho Board Member