

# Innovation, Knowledge and Learning

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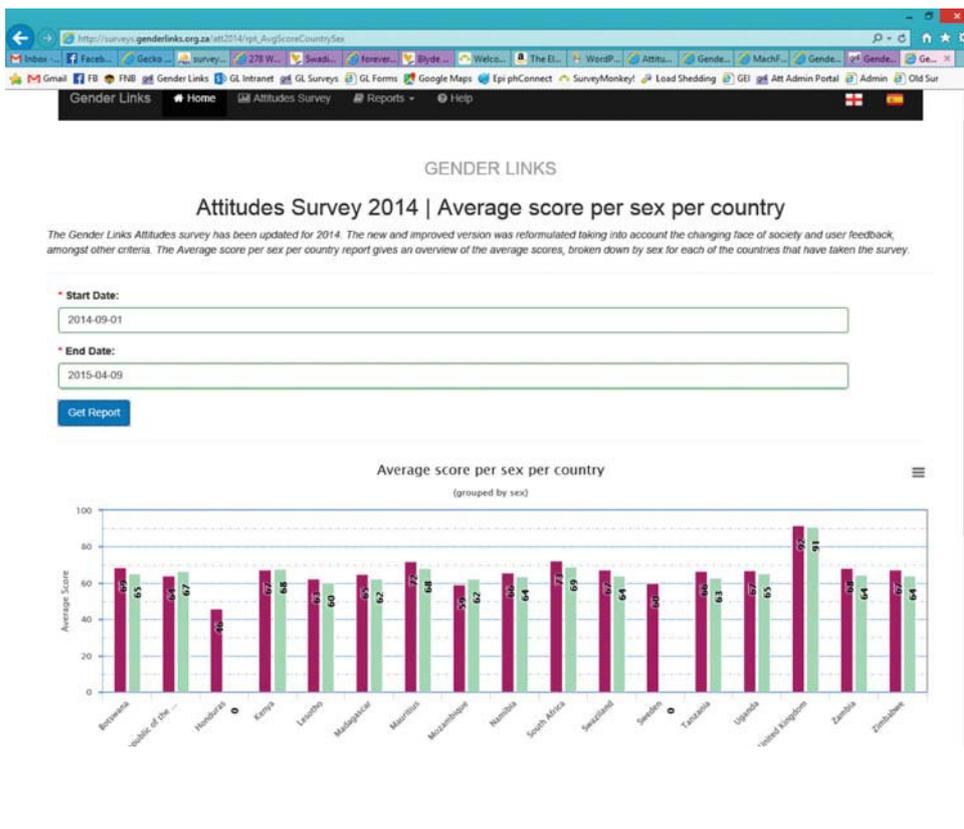


A learning organisation: Albert Ngosa, Monica Bandeira, Susan Mogari and Judith Maneli.

Photo: Gender Links

Since making the transition from M&E to Results for Change which brings together M and E, knowledge, learning, innovation, and value for money, GL has

invested greatly in developing innovative systems and tools for data collection and analysis.

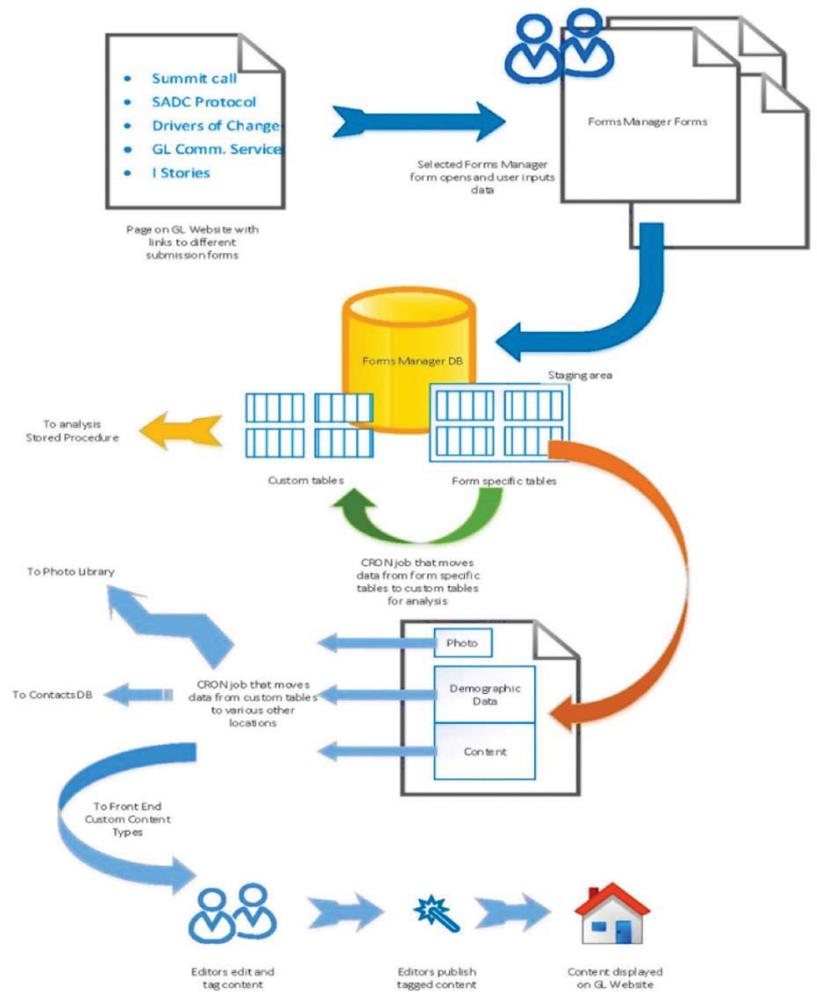


Over the years Gender Links has developed a number of online platforms to capture data gathered in the countries it works in. During 2014 the focus was on ensuring that these online surveys are also accompanied by a number of reports that anyone can access through the website. These provide real time access to the data the organisation collects to anyone interested in exploring it. These innovations are important tools in advocacy as they provide information on how different countries rate in relation to important aspects of GLs work, such as Gender Attitudes, Citizen Scorecards, Knowledge of the SADC Gender Protocol, and Organisational Gender Scorecards. The figure adjacent illustrates the kind of report that can be extracted regarding Gender Attitudes.

GL took this innovation a step further during the 2014 summits, by developing a complex system (see diagram) of gathering the over 700 case studies online, publishing them to the website, and shunting the various products (such as photos and videos to GL IT archives). The online application included two integrated surveys: how citizens have used the SADC Gender Protocol (SGP) and what they would like to see strengthened post 2015. This also resulted in VFM green savings of GBP5175 (savings in printing costs) and resulted in IT capacity building.

Some online surveys have been created for internal purposes and are not accessible by the public. These serve an important project tracking and research data collection function. One such survey is the Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) which is being used to assess the impact of our entrepreneurship development project with women survivors of GBV. By gathering the GEI at the beginning and at the end of the project we will be in a position to assess its impact.

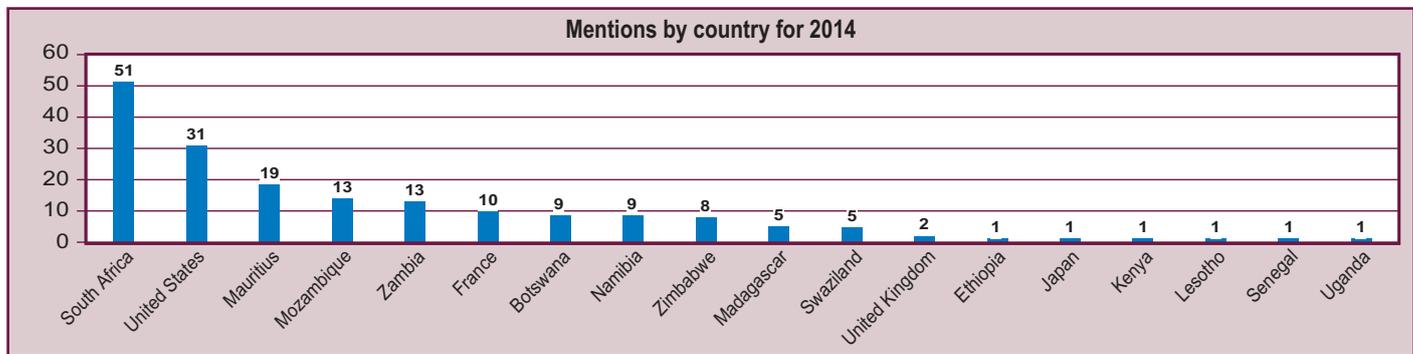
GL has also expanded its support to other organisations through exploring the degree to which they are gender sensitive. The Organisational Scorecard was developed as a way for staff from these organisations to rate themselves and the organisation in relation to gender and has proved to be a useful starting point in exploring this issue with organisations. The Organisational Scorecard



is also available on the GL website and produces a number of reports on the data collected.

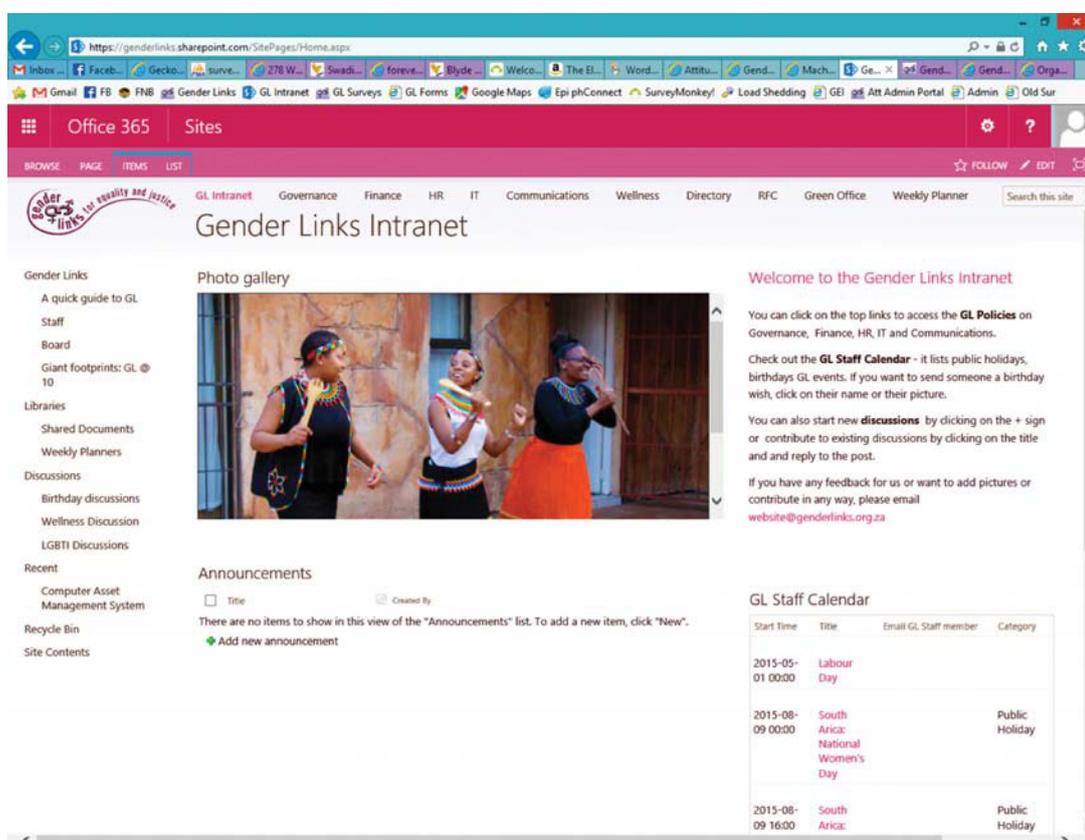
GL continues to improve on the way it gathers data regarding programme work, through the development

of a new system using Epi Info. This should improve the efficiency and effectiveness of monitoring and tracking implementation. As an example, the work GL does with over 400 councils in ten countries will be tracked on Epi where each council has a record where data about it and all events or workshops conducted with them are captured (image left). An exciting part of using Epi Info is that through the use of coordinates GL will be able to map all its events on a world map. Much of the development of this new system took place during 2014 and it will go live in 2015.



It is important for GL to monitor the extent to which its work reaches people. This is referred to as outreach and much of this involves monitoring the extent to which GL is mentioned in the media. GL has obtained

detailed information of its online footprint through a service called Meltwater News. The graph illustrates the information GL is able to obtain regarding where and how many times it appears online.



During 2014, GL made a concerted effort to maximise its use of SharePoint through office 365. This platform facilitates the sharing and storage of and collaboration on documents across countries. It also provides a platform for staff across all countries to connect. Given that it is a cloud-based solution, staff are able to work on the same document at any time independent of server activity at HQ. In addition, this has also led to a decrease in the number of emails sent as everyone accesses these online.

## Knowledge

Gender Links is becoming a reference point for scholarship on gender in the SADC region. This is immediately evident through a search on Google Scholar for "Gender Links." While largely anecdotal, this brief review of google findings spells out some key areas of impact of the knowledge being generated by Gender Links.



Such a search yields nearly 900 results, and the scope and caliber of the academic community engaging with the organization is a testament to the quality of research taking place.

The first page of “hits” are documents exclusively authored by Gender Links, which gives a sense of the level of research output of the organization. With both region-wide research projects appearing and country studies in 9 different countries, it is clear that the organization is working on the ground across the region.

One of the first things that is evident is that certain foundational documents of Gender Links are taken up widely; their citations are ongoing, indicating that they are becoming reference points. For example, the “Ringing up the Changes” report appears as a citation in 41 academic articles, some as recent as 2012, meaning its relevance is still widespread. Similarly, the *Gender in Media Training: A South African tool kit* was published in 2002, but was still being cited in 2013, indicating its ongoing value and relevance.

An additional search on SADC Protocol on Gender and Development ranks the Gender Links website as second in line, only after the SADC website itself. This demonstrates the importance of Gender Links as a reference point around the Protocol on Gender and Development. Furthermore, in a scholar search on the same, 74 sources cite gender links. Of them, topics covered include electoral gender quotas, gender budgeting, peacekeeping, and gender in the media.

The caliber of publications citing Gender Links reports is also noteworthy, indicating that Gender Links is generating quality research, which is being taken seriously and recognized in the academic community. Gender Links publications are cited 176 times in articles appearing in peer reviewed journals. This includes such diverse journals such as *Gender and Development*, *Journal of African Media Studies*, *Politics and Gender*, *Journal of Health Communication*, and *Representation*. Furthermore, Gender Links publications emerge as key sources in three books, including *Gender and the Millennium Development Goals*.

Anecdotal evidence has already demonstrated that Gender Links research and methods are receiving widespread uptake in the practitioner sphere. For

example, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime uses the Gender Link's Barometer in its own research. Civil society organisations in India are modeling their own citizen monitoring mechanism after the Barometer. Local government Centers of Excellence are being formed in Fiji. Now it is apparent that Gender Links impact is also being felt in the realm of scholarship.

Finally, while peer reviewed, academic journals aren't Gender Links' primary target, it is clear that its reach is extended to these debates. For example, the article “*Electoral gender quotes: Between equality of opportunity and equality of result*,” Gender Links is extensively cited. A comparative study of gender based electoral quotas in nearly 100 countries finds that, contrary to popular belief, quota systems are coming closer to providing equality of opportunity than equality of result. This article was cited 43 times in peer reviewed journals, and has findings which are clearly important for academics and policy makers alike. This is only one example of over a hundred like it.

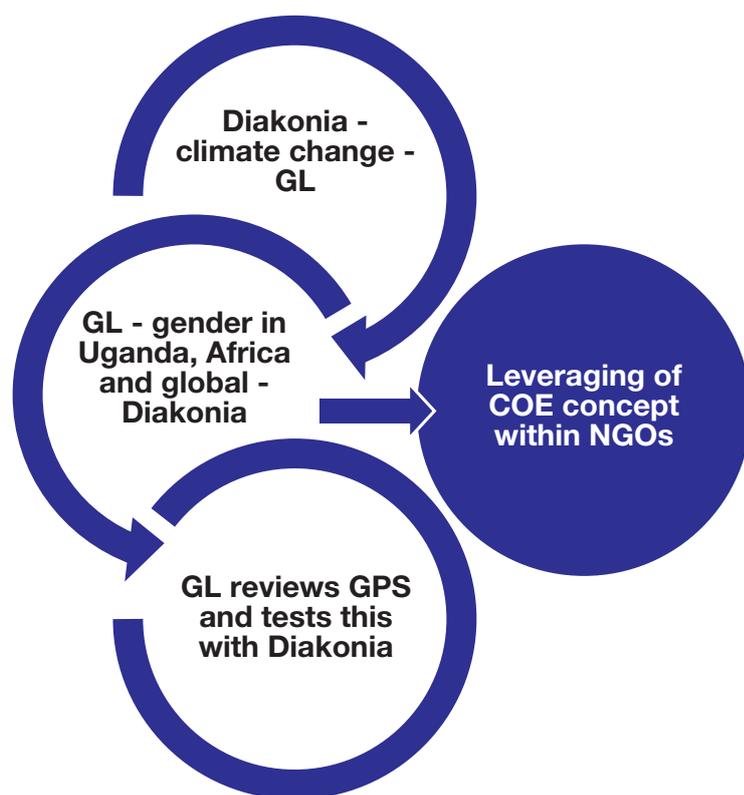
Another such example is “*Numbers and beyond: The relevance of critical mass in gender research*.” This article explores whether women represent the interests of women once elected into office. Obviously, independent academic research like this is invaluable for Gender Links to test empirically its theory of change, which has as an assumption that having more women elected into office will lead to real changes in the lives of women in the constituency. (Happily, and not surprisingly for organizations working on gender at the local level, the researchers found that “representation by gender improves substantive outcomes for women in every polity for which we have a measure.”)

While widespread recognition in the arenas of governance and the media are not particularly surprising, given that they are the mainstay of Gender Link's focus, emerging scholarship is also reflecting the shift in focus of Gender Link's work, with a widespread research plan on Gender Based violence gaining traction in academic debates on GBV. Furthermore, the roll out of entrepreneurship work has been reflected in the ways and kinds of organisations making reference to the organisation, with economic empowerment emerging as an important area of research and discussion.

## Learning

GL is a learning organisation that produces major research every year (such as 15 country and a regional Barometer on progress towards achieving the targets of the SGP). The table illustrates the several interlocking and dynamic partnerships that leverage the work of GL and vice versa, including a recent presentation to DFID South Africa on the implications of the International Development (Gender Equality Act) 2014.

GL's partnership with Swedish-based Diakonia is an example of a dynamic learning partnership. Diakonia, a GL donor, offered GL training on climate change, then requested assistance (provided through GL's consulting arm - GL Services) for gender mainstreaming in Uganda, then Africa, now globally. GL is leveraging its Centres of Excellence (COE) concept with Diakonia, including using the GSC and GPS. Diakonia feedback on the GPS has resulted in GL adding five questions on "difficult" issues to the GPS and updating its ToC to include diverse gender identities. The table maps the different Learning Partnerships that GL belongs to and how these enhance sustainability.



Mapping of GL learning and sharing

Learning groups	Brief Description	Formal mechanisms	Informal mechanisms	Effects and contribution to sustainability
<b>PPA Gender Working Group</b>	Global PPA partners.	Periodic meetings.	Regular E Mail exchanges.	GL has improved and refined its Theory of Change.
<b>Southern African Learning Partnership (SALP)</b>	GL (the only southern-based PPA grantee) coordinates the group of representative offices of PPA's in the region.	Meetings twice a year - the last in November 2013 focused on Value for Money and Innovation.	Strengthened bilateral ties, e.g. GL is now working with Oxfam Southern Africa on a funding strategy for strengthening the women's movement in Southern Africa.	GL and partners adapted the Bond Principles of Credible Evidence; these have been incorporated in GL's Results for Change Manual. GL's has enhanced its capacity on VFM through the partnership, including collecting 15 case studies on the GL website.
<b>DFID SA</b>	Local DFID office.	GL invited to run a "teach in" on the new Gender Equality Act for International Development.	Frequent exchange of E Mails on DFID and GL priorities, especially on VAW.	GL is well networked with DFID in the host office and country operations, where it is also eligible to apply for funds.
<b>The Alliance Network</b>	Network of 15 country and ten theme clusters that champion the SGP.	Lobbying, research, media and advocacy training linked to annual meetings.	Frequent alerts sent by members, eg a controversial provision in the rape law in Mozambique.	Ownership by members of the network has been enhanced (see Part One, Section 6, Beneficiary Feedback); networks now raising their own funds.
<b>Media and Local Government COEs</b>	400 institutions that GL works with on gender mainstreaming.	Annual verification and "Learning through Listening" papers.	Study visits and exchanges.	45% increase in COE fund raising and allocations for gender work in 2012/2013.
<b>The Gender and Media Diversity Centre</b>	Media development and training institutions.	Biannual meetings, monthly seminars, online journal.	Alerts on gender stereotypes in the media.	Dynamic learning and sharing centre linked to the global Gender and Media Alliance led by UNESCO that will sustain momentum on gender and media work.
<b>Institutional</b>	GL staff, associates and Board.	Annual <i>Learning Journey</i> - reflection by all staff.	Monthly "brown bag" lunches on various topics.	These sessions provide a well of ideas and inspiration for GL work.

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) “categorises GL as a **resource partner** because of the immense knowledge and experience on gender that it brings to its partner portfolio. This is one of their major contributions to our work. They have been a great resource to our core partners, faith based organisations who are largely less experienced on gender issues. They have particularly assisted in empowering them to understand gender concepts, gender mainstreaming and building sustainable campaigns as well as link them to broader human rights discourse and gender coalitions. Apart from trainings they have done for FBOs working with NCA over the years, we were able to build on GL's resources to challenge leadership in churches to uphold human rights instruments and this formed the basis of a chapter in our toolkit: Understanding Human Rights, Gender and the Bible for example. Since 2013, with support from NCA there is a special award for faith based organisations as part of the SADC Gender Protocol Summit and Awards.”<sup>1</sup>

An important part of learning for GL is how we learn from others. GL has been part of several learning platforms (see table) and initiated the Southern African Learning Partnership (SALP) in 2013. This platform has provided the organisation with opportunities to engage with other organisations in Southern Africa regarding themes that are relevant to all. In 2014, SALP met in Harare to discuss Value for Money and Innovation. Learning papers were exchanged and discussions on what is meant by innovation took place. This information was integrated back into GL when the VfM policy was developed. Learning and sharing with other organisations is seen as central to the way in which GL operates.

Internally, the organisation has also developed ways of gathering information regarding its institutional effectiveness through its Organisational Scorecard and the 360 degree evaluations that occur annually. By improving the systems for data capturing and analysis the organisation is able to produce useful outputs that facilitate engagement and integration into work. Internal learning continues to be emphasised in GL with several platforms created for this. On one hand, internal seminars take place on different themes during the year, allowing people to share learnings and creating space for debate on challenging topics. During 2014 the focus was on LGBTI and several discussions took place within the organisation regarding this. On the other hand, GL continues to produce a collection of learning journeys from staff. These are powerful narratives from each staff member regarding something they learnt during the year.

## How GL applies learning to its programming

In the flagship Alliance programme, GL and its partners set out to campaign for an Addendum on Gender and Climate Change, based on the experience of working with the SADC Gender Protocol (SGP) at the local level. Despite gathering 1067 signatures in support of the Addendum, the move met with bureaucratic inertia from the SADC Gender Unit (SADC GU), anxious not to reopen negotiations on the Protocol.

However, as a result of the campaign, the Alliance succeeded in mainstreaming gender in the SADC Protocol on Environmental Management and Sustainable Development (SPEMSD). More important, this “creative tension” between civil society and governments led to a change of tactics. With 2015 (deadline for the SADC and MDG targets) around the corner, the Alliance realised that it is more strategic to lobby for inclusion of sustainable development in the updated SGP, than to lobby for an appendix to the existing instrument.

### In its **Gender and Media**

work, GL's assumption that dominant norms that lead to the exclusion of women's voices can be changed relatively quickly has proved elusive. Women sources in the media COE's have remained at around 21% to 22%. However, as a result of flexible funding, GL has been able to expand the ten stage COE process by another ten steps to train journalists on- the-job and to renew work with media training institutions. As reflected in this year's report, this strategy is poised to deliver long term results.



GL made some errors of calculation in opening a Lusophone **GL News Service**. Mozambique only has a few daily and two weekly papers that compete against each other, making it difficult to achieve critical mass, especially as costs of operating in Angola have proved too prohibitive to extend the service there. However, the extensive reach of radio, and growing reach of new media in Mozambique prompted GL to change strategy to more creative multi-media solutions that have since also been applied to the Anglophone and Francophone Services. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the opening of an office linked to this service has great long term strategic and leveraging value for GL.



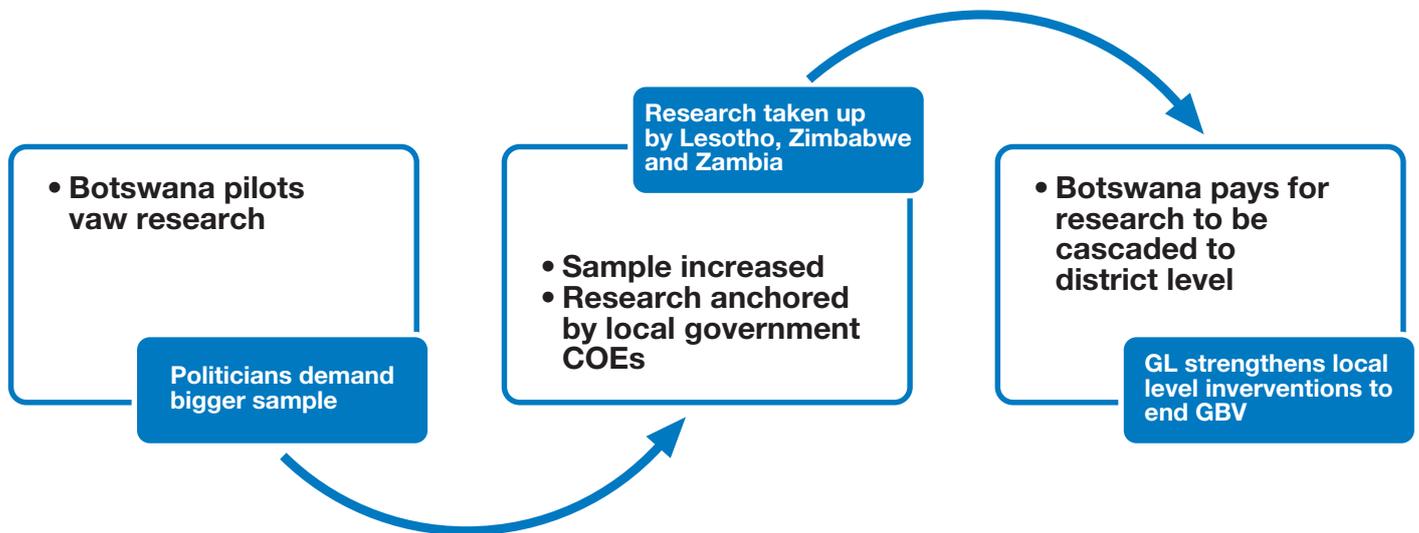
In its **Gender and Local Government** work, GL assumed that it could increase women's representation in local government in the short term. Such changes are only possible when there are elections, and even then there

has been an even mix of progress and regression, again showing that social change is seldom linear. Based on the experience in Mauritius, where GL played a central and acknowledged role in devising a legislated quota for women in local government that led to a quadrupling of women's representation in one election, GL is now sharpening its focus on lobbying for legislated quotas over the coming two years.

An unintended consequence of GL's more stringent evidence requirements from its local government COEs in the 2014 summits is that gender scores

dropped, reflecting greater rigour rather than regression. On the other hand, this evidence revealed a six fold increase in resources raised or committed by the COEs to GBP 2 225 288 in 2013/2014, compared to GBP 11 415 in PPA spend: a powerful indicator of increased commitment to gender responsive governance, and one of GL's best VFM case studies.<sup>ii</sup>

In its **Gender Justice** portfolio that measures VAW, GL's first national pilot study in Botswana produced such shocking results that some politicians questioned the sample and demanded that the study be cascaded to district level (which the government is now paying for). GL pre-empted similar criticism in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Zambia by expanding the research to include districts, anchored by the local government COE's. This approach has helped to enhance local engagement with the research - a key priority in the coming period.



<sup>i</sup> Reference letter, Loveness Jambaya Nyakujarah, Regional Gender Policy Advisor  
<sup>ii</sup> GL Gender and Governance VFM Case Study, GL VFM Case Study