



Course offerings

October 2026 to March 2027



**GENDER LINKS
ACADEMY**

GL ACADEMY 2026/27

LEARN | CONNECT | APPLY | TRANSFORM

Feminist learning for a more equal, just and sustainable world



PEOPLE
PURPOSE
POSSIBILITY

*Stronger
together for
gender justice*



**GENDER LINKS
ACADEMY**

GL ACADEMY 2026/27

Ethical Applications of AI

FOR NON-PROFITS

Technology with a feminist purpose





**GENDER LINKS
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GL ACADEMY 2026/27

A Feminist Approach to Value for Money

Making visible what matters





**GENDER LINKS
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GL ACADEMY 2026/27

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

Changing Discourse,
Shifting Narratives





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GL ACADEMY 2026/27

Care for the Carer/Activist

Collective and Self-Care





**GENDER LINKS
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GL ACADEMY 2026/27

Organisational Growth and Development

Stronger organisations
for greater impact



PEOPLE | PURPOSE | POSSIBILITY

Ethical applications of AI for non-profits

Course prospectus | October 2026 - March 2027



Moodle access: <https://academy.genderlinks.org.za/course/edit.php?id=12>

Course coordinators: Dr Monica Bandeira and Kevin Chiramba

Objective: Equip non-profits to use artificial intelligence (AI) confidently, ethically and practically - strengthening research, communications, administration and financial management without compromising privacy, accuracy, integrity or feminist values.

Rationale: Over the last year (literally!) AI has taken the world by storm, moving at such a rapid space that developers themselves say there is more than 10 percent chance that this technology can wipe out humanity in less than a decade. Similar fears gripped us all with the advent of the Internet in the early nineties. At GL we believe in Making IT work for gender justice. We need to harness technology before technology harnesses us. This course explores practical and ethical applications of AI that can help us reduce costs and increase efficiency without sacrificing our core feminist values.

Who should attend: Staff, leaders and volunteers of women's rights and LGBTQI+ organisations, women human rights defenders and partners who want to put AI to work in their organisations. No technical background is required.

Course dates and links

Date	Module	Zoom registration link
Wednesday 14 October 2026	AI Module 1: Getting started - which AI, and the ethics of using it	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/10ke3swQIW6POSys7oSRw
Wednesday 11 November 2026	AI Module 2: AI for research and communications	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/XhlaMaEnS-SZMEiORy-9TA
Wednesday 13 January 2027	AI Module 3: AI for human resources and administration	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/e_qe4vCsTaO2YWiQ5h-UkQ
Wednesday 10 February 2027	AI Module 4: AI for finance, donor reporting and compliance	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/AnQWqTUoSgcagHFtw4sLQQ
Monday 8 March 2027	GL Academy graduation <i>Celebrating knowledge and learning!</i>	

Sessions run once a month, for 90 minutes on Wednesdays from 12noon to 13.30 SAST. All sessions are recorded and hosted, with readings, exercises and quizzes, on the GL Academy Moodle platform for self-paced learning.

Course modules

Module 1: Getting started - which AI, and the ethics of using it - 14 October 2026

This module demystifies AI. Participants learn what AI can and cannot do, how to match a tool to a task and a budget, and how to weigh the risks before adopting it. It confronts the ethical questions head-on: data privacy and consent, safeguarding, bias in AI systems, environmental cost, and the risk of losing the authentic voices of the women and communities we serve.

- **Lecture:** What AI is, how it works, and the tool landscape - free and paid.
- **Reading:** Ethical AI principles for civil society; the “red lines” for sensitive data.
- **Exercise:** Draft the first outline of your organisation's AI use guideline.
- **Case study:** Gender Links demonstrates the 15 AI agents it has built for editorial, media, fundraising, reporting and Barometer work - what worked, what did not, and what it cost.

Module 2: AI for research and communications - 11 November 2026

The module that delivers the fastest wins. Participants learn to write effective prompts and to use AI for desk research, literature and policy scans, referencing, and the drafting of press releases, blogs, I-Stories, newsletters and social media content, while keeping their organisation's voice and verifying every fact and source.

- **Lecture:** Prompting that works; research, drafting and repurposing content with AI.
- **Reading:** Spotting AI “hallucinations”; disclosure, credit and consent in storytelling.
- **Exercise:** Turn one of your own reports into a publication-ready story, then fact-check it.

Module 3: AI for human resources and administration - 13 January 2027

How AI can free up staff time in the back office, drafting job descriptions, policies and board papers, transcribing and summarising meetings, scheduling, and organising institutional knowledge. Equal attention goes to what must never be delegated to a machine: recruitment decisions, disciplinary and safeguarding matters, and anything involving personal staff or beneficiary data.

- **Lecture:** AI across the HR and admin cycle; protecting personal information (POPIA and equivalents).
- **Reading:** Bias in AI-assisted recruitment; what to keep out of an AI tool.
- **Exercise:** Use AI to draft one HR or admin document, then review it against your policy.

Module 4: AI for finance, donor reporting and compliance - 10 February 2027

The module closes the loop on organisational sustainability: using AI to scope funding calls, draft proposal and budget narratives, interrogate expenditure patterns, prepare donor reports and check compliance requirements, with the verification discipline and audit trail that financial accountability demands.

- **Lecture:** AI in the funding and reporting cycle; where AI gets numbers wrong.
- **Reading:** Donor expectations on the disclosure of AI use; verification and audit trails.
- **Exercise:** Draft a donor report narrative or funding call summary from your own documents.

Course requirements

Participation: Attendance at three of the four live sessions, or completion of the equivalent self-paced modules and quizzes on Moodle.

Assignment: One assignment, set at the start of the course and due two weeks after Module 4 - an “AI in our organisation” package consisting of: (a) one practical AI-assisted output drawn from your own work; (b) a one-page reflection on the prompts used, what had to be corrected and what was verified; and (c) a one-page AI use guideline for your organisation.

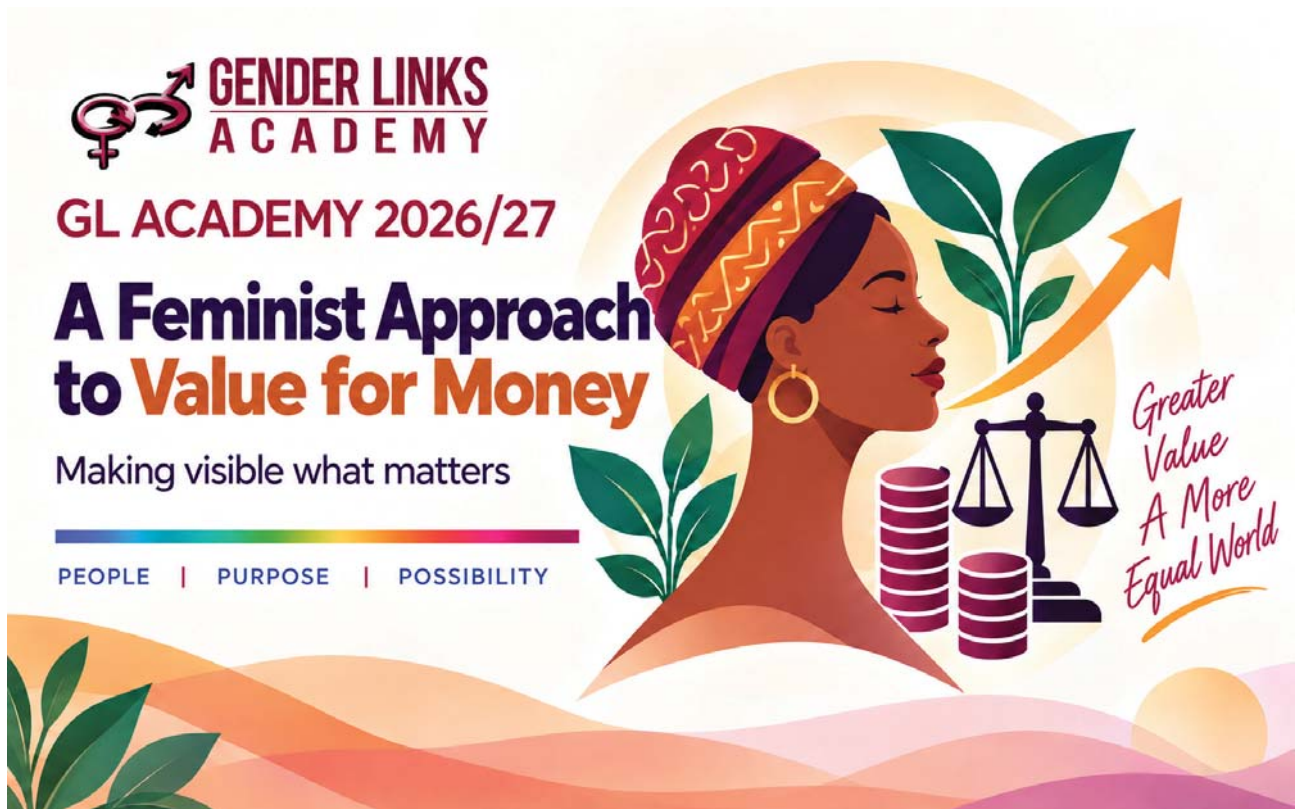
Course completion: 80% obtained on the assignment and the end-of-course quiz. Certificates are issued on the Moodle platform and at the GL Academy graduation on 8 March 2027.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning: A baseline self-assessment of confidence and use at the start of the course, and an endline assessment at the end.

Enrolment: Free for WVL and Marang Fund grantees and GL staff. Other participants pay a cost-recovery fee via PayFast of \$25.00 or equivalent.

A Feminist Approach to Value for Money

Course prospectus | October 2026 - March 2027



Moodle access: <https://academy.genderlinks.org.za/course/edit.php?id=13>

Course coordinator: Colleen Lowe Morna

Objective: To equip feminists with the tools to measure the value that we often unknowingly add to donor projects by unapologetically placing Value for Money (VFM) in the context of counting the invisible work that women do.

Rationale: The first instinct of most feminists when asked to demonstrate VFM is to shrug and turn the other way. Guided by GL's motto: *making care work count and counting that is does*, we will explore how to measure and give visibility to the five E's - economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity and environment - in our work without compromising our core values. Rather, through a series of highly engaging and interactive sessions, we will explore and devise tools for giving visibility to how WRO make the donor dollar go much further than is often ever recorded. In so doing, we strengthen our track record and case for funding in an increasingly challenging fund-raising environment.

Who should attend: Staff, leaders, finance officers and volunteers of women's rights and LBTQI+ organisations, women human rights defenders and partners who want to make the case that \$1 in the hands of a Women's Rights Organisation is multiplied many times over: if only we track the data!

Course dates and links

Date	Module	Zoom registration link
Tuesday 20 October 2026	VFM Module 1: Introduction - VFM and the unwaged work of women - a feminist perspective	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/8tObKdQyWuTJsg
Tuesday 17 November 2026	VFM Module 2: Economy and efficiency	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/fQ98PN8HQcyycRBtJA8yUg
Tuesday 19 January 2027	VFM Module 3: Equity and Effectiveness	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/oBQDMmQMSCa1CDrJLoxL6Q
Tuesday 16 February 2027	VFM Module 4: Environment	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/wg3lv2sFS2WxUO4BcD8CtA
Monday 8 March 2027	GL Academy Graduation <i>Celebrating knowledge and learning!</i>	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/cexl3CarRkK_KV53_AKnvQ

Sessions run once a month, for 90 minutes on Wednesdays from 12noon to 13.30 SAST. All sessions are recorded and hosted, with readings, exercises and quizzes, on the GL Academy Moodle platform for self-paced learning.

Course modules

Module 1: Getting started - VFM and feminism: friends or foes - 20 October 2026

This first module sets out the issues. What is Value for Money? What is feminism? Where and how do the two intersect? How can we use VFM arguments and methods to advance feminist agendas?

- **Lecture:** How gathering VFM data can help us understand/amplify work and contributions that are taken for granted.
- **Reading:** A series of readings on feminism and Value for Money.
- **Exercise:** Finding hidden contributions in our everyday work.
- **Case study:** Making care work count.

Module 2: Economy and efficiency - 17 November 2026

The module that resonates with our finance departments! Getting the best value for the best price is something women do all the time (we just don't call it VFM!) Now many exciting new technologies enable us to do so more efficiently. Will this result in job losses? Or create more opportunities?

- **Lecture:** Procurement, feminism and VFM.
- **Reading:** Share your procurement and IT policies; course handouts on economy and efficiency.
- **Exercise:** Plan an event together. How do we ensure maximum economy and efficiency?
- **Panel:** Three participants will share how they ensure best value in their work, including through in-kind contributions.

Module 3: Effectiveness and equity - 19 January 2027

Here is the good news: VFM is not only about doing more with less, but also about doing it better, even if that costs a little more. That includes ensuring equitable outcomes, even if that comes at additional cost.

- **Lecture:** Beyond numbers: measuring impact and justice.
- **Reading:** Course handouts on effectiveness and equity.
- **Exercise:** Use AI to draft one HR or admin document, then review it against your policy.
- **Case study:** GL@25: Planning, synergies and VFM.

Module 4: Environment and wrap up - 16 February 2027

There is more good news! Being kind to the environment is less costly to the planet and to our budgets. Going green, coming clean and achieving VFM - three wins in one! This module explores the simple things we can do to achieve all three; and to record these wins. In this module, we will also share a case study of the VFM analysis we did of a major project undertaken by GL that some may be familiar with the FCDO-sponsored Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) project 2023 to 2025.

- **Lecture:** Measuring and minimising our carbon footprint.
- **Reading:** Various texts on feminism, climate justice and VFM.
- **Exercise:** Use the carbon footprint tool to measure how your carbon footprint differs depending on the choices you make. How does going green and coming clean contribute to VFM?
- **Case study:** Measuring Value for Money (VFM) in the Women of the South Speak Out Programme 2023 to 2025. Tabettha Kanegoni, GL Director of Programmes and Monica Bandeira, GL MEL Associate.

Course requirements

Participation: Attendance at three of the four live sessions, or completion of the equivalent self-paced modules and quizzes on Moodle.

Assignment: One assignment, set at the start of the course and due two weeks after Module 4 - Measuring VFM in my organisation or on a project you are working on.

Course completion: 80% obtained on the assignment and the end-of-course quiz. Certificates are issued on the Moodle platform and at the GL Academy graduation on 8 March 2027.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning: A baseline self-assessment of confidence and use at the start of the course, and an endline assessment at the end.

Enrolment: Free for WVL and Marang Fund grantees and GL staff. Other participants pay a cost-recovery fee via PayFast of \$25.00 or equivalent.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression: Changing Discourse, Shifting Narratives

Course prospectus | October 2026 - March 2027



Moodle access: <https://academy.genderlinks.org.za/course/edit.php?id=14>

Course coordinator: Lusanda Mamba

Objective: To strengthen participants' knowledge, political and legal analysis, and practical tools to mainstream SOGIE, challenge exclusionary narratives and advance inclusive and transformative change grounded in intersectional feminist and Pan African values.

Rationale: The course explores how history, law, culture, religion and politics shape understandings of gender and sexuality in Africa, while supporting participants to translate learning into institutional change, lobbying, advocacy and movement action. The course examines how opposition to LGBTQI rights intersects with challenges to women's rights, SRHR, bodily autonomy, sexuality education and wider democratic and human rights gains.

Who should attend: Staff, leaders and volunteers of women's rights and LGBTQI+ organisations, women human rights defenders and partners.

Course dates and links

Date	Module	Zoom registration link
Thursday 22 Oct 2026	SOGIE Module 1: SOGIE, Power & Intersectionality in African Contexts	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/9aq69S0nQgCV8iE_ZULXrw
Wednesday 18 Nov 2026	SOGIE Module 2: Law, Rights & the Politics of Family, Values & Sovereignty	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/wjqokBEQqyePsnzc-C1RA
Thursday 21 January 2027	SOGIE: Module 3: Changing Discourse & Reimagining African Narratives	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/pS0QtQ1T42H-v8yP01fJg
Thursday 18 February 2027	SOGIE Module 4: From Analysis to Action: Mainstreaming, Lobbying & Movement Power	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/xzKbSKxsQcWQKFWA8V4DZw
Monday 8 March 2027	GL Academy Graduation Celebrating knowledge and learning!	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/cexl3CarRk_KV53_AKnvQ

Sessions run once a month, for 90 minutes on Wednesdays from 12noon to 13.30 SAST. All sessions are recorded and hosted, with readings, exercises and quizzes, on the GL Academy Moodle platform for self-paced learning.

Course modules

Module 1: SOGIE, Power & Intersectionality in African Contexts - 22 October 2026

This module establishes a shared conceptual and analytical foundation. Participants critically engage with sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex and gender, while examining myths, stigma and exclusion. It explores how sexuality and gender intersect with race, class, disability, age, religion and other structures of inequality. Participants explore African histories and understandings of gender and sexual diversity and interrogate how colonialism, inherited laws and dominant knowledge systems have influenced contemporary ideas about what is considered "normal", "traditional" or "African". This deepens the intersectional foundation of the original course.

Key question: *How do history, power and intersecting inequalities shape our understanding of gender, sexuality and belonging in Africa?*

- **Lecture:** SOGIE, intersectionality, power, African histories of gender and sexuality, coloniality and inherited systems of knowledge.
- **Reading:** SOGIE and intersectionality resources; selected African feminist and historical perspectives.
- **Exercise:** Map how SOGIE intersects with issues and inequalities within participants' sectors, movements and country contexts.

Module 2: Law, Rights & the Politics of Family, Values & Sovereignty - 18 November 2026

This module interrogates the African legal and political landscape in which SOGIE work takes place. Participants examine inherited colonial laws and penal codes alongside constitutional protections, national legislation, regional and international human rights commitments, progressive jurisprudence and policy developments, implementation gaps and areas of legal regression. Comparative African examples explore how law can function both as an instrument of exclusion and as a site of resistance, accountability and social change. Participants interrogate contemporary narratives around **family, African values, culture, religion, children and sovereignty**, asking who defines these concepts and to what political effect.

Key question: *Where do our struggles intersect, and what do we miss when we respond to them separately?*

- **Lecture:** African SOGIE legal landscape; colonial legal legacies; constitutional and human rights protections; legal gains and regression; contemporary anti rights narratives.
- **Reading:** Selected African legal and policy case studies and regional human rights frameworks.
- **Exercise:** Legal, political and power mapping of a current SOGIE issue, identifying laws, actors, narratives, allies, risks and opportunities.

Module 3: Changing Discourse & Reimagining African Narratives - 21 January 2026

This module moves from analysing dominant narratives to **building alternatives**. Participants examine how language, media, political discourse and movement communications shape public understandings of gender and sexuality. Participants interrogate who gets to define **family, African identity, culture and values**, including the contradictions that arise when inherited colonial laws are mobilised in defence of supposedly authentic African values. Drawing on **Ubuntu, African feminist thought, dignity, collective humanity, historical complexity and lived African realities**, participants explore narratives that affirm belonging and recognise the diversity of African societies. The objective is not simply to counter harmful messages, but to reclaim narrative power and articulate the societies and futures movements seek to create.

Key question: *What are we for, not only what are we against?*

- **Lecture:** Narrative power, African feminist and Pan African perspectives, Ubuntu, public discourse and movement narratives.
- **Reading:** African case studies on narrative change, SOGIE, feminism and social justice.
- **Exercise:** Deconstruct an exclusionary narrative and identify the power, assumptions and political interests underpinning it.

Module 4: From Analysis to Action: Mainstreaming, Lobbying & Movement Power - 18 February 2026

The final module translates learning into institutional change and outward facing advocacy. Participants identify practical entry points for mainstreaming SOGIE across programming, human resources, safeguarding, MEL, budgeting, procurement, research, communications and organisational policy, building on the institutional mainstreaming focus of the original course.

Participants also explore lobbying, advocacy, allyship and movement solidarity. They identify the change sought, who holds the power to make that change, potential allies and opponents, and the most strategic entry points for engagement.

Key question: *How do we translate shared analysis into institutional change and collective power?*

- **Lecture:** Institutional mainstreaming; policy development; lobbying and advocacy; allyship, solidarity and movement power.
- **Reading:** SOGIE policy guidance, advocacy resources and movement case studies.
- **Exercise:** Institutional SOGIE policy and practice review; stakeholder and power mapping for advocacy.

Course requirements

Participation: Attendance at three of the four live sessions, or completion of the equivalent self-paced modules and quizzes on Moodle.

Assignment: One assignment, set at the start of the course and due two weeks after Module 4 - SOGIE inclusive organisational policy and a targeted lobbying or advocacy intervention.

Course completion: 80% obtained on the assignment and the end-of-course quiz. Certificates are issued on the Moodle platform and at the GL Academy graduation on 8 March 2027.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning: A baseline self-assessment of confidence and use at the start of the course, and an endline assessment at the end.

Enrolment: Free for WVL and Marang Fund grantees and GL staff. Other participants pay a cost-recovery fee via PayFast of \$25.00 or equivalent.

Caring for carers and activists:

Collective and self-care

Course prospectus | October 2026 - March 2027



Moodle access: <https://academy.genderlinks.org.za/course/edit.php?id=15>

Course coordinators: Dr Monica Bandeira and Lynette Mudekunya

Objective: To apply an appreciation of self and collective care to develop practical strategies for embedding these into our lives and organisations to address the needs and risks of carers and activists.

Rationale: Most frontline of care workers and activists - whether responding to GBV, or SRHR and HIV or as gender activists - come from and are based in the communities that they are working with. They have experienced and often continue to experience the same stresses and traumas as the people that they are working with. Every day they experience further stress as they care for and support those that they are working with. They pour care out to others from a half full reservoir. Online violence and backlash are adding a new layer of stress to activists.

Care for carers and activists is not a luxury but is rather a fundamental ingredient in sustaining and strengthening movements. Investing in those who, for generations, have provided care for others at the expense of their own wellbeing is also deeply political.

Who should attend: Staff, leaders and volunteers of women's rights and LGBTQI+ organisations, women human rights defenders and partners.

Course dates and links

Date	Module	Zoom registration link
Tuesday 27 October 2026	Module 1: Mapping the Activist Burnout Landscape	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/9876543210
Tuesday 24 November 2026	Module 2: Setting Boundaries (Digital and Real-World)	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/8765432109
Tuesday 26 January 2027	Module 3: From Self-Care to Collective Care	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/7654321098
Tuesday 23 February 2027	Module 4: Building Your Sustainable Action Plan	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/6543210987
Monday 8 March 2027	GL Academy Graduation <i>Celebrating knowledge and learning!</i>	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/j/5432109876

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Course modules

Module 1: Mapping the Activist Burnout Landscape - 27 October 2026

The first module sets the scene - understanding how systemic oppression, secondary trauma, and internal organisational pressures impact the well-being of women activists. It validates the specific emotional toll of women's rights work and deconstructs the myth of the "martyr activist."

- **Lecture:** The unique stressors of feminist activism (e.g., online harassment, emotional labor, funding instability). Recognising the signs of burnout vs. vicarious trauma.
- **Reading:** Selected readings on physical, emotional, social, cognitive / mental and spiritual. What is burning out?
- **Exercise:** What motivates me as a caregiver and activist? What is the stress I have now in my role as a caregiver / activist

Module 2: Setting Boundaries (Digital and Real-World) - 24 November 2026

This module equips activists with scripts and strategies to protect their energy from constant crisis mode. Practical tools for protecting personal peace, managing digital overload, and saying "no" without guilt.

- **Readings:** Digital hygiene: Managing notifications, handling trolls, and creating "off-grid" time. The art of the feminist "No": Overcoming the socialized urge to over-compromise.
- **Exercise:** Participants practice using specific boundary scripts (e.g., turning down a last-minute project or setting communication hours with beneficiaries).
- **Panel/Fireside Chat:** Brief Q&A or storytelling with a veteran activist sharing their boundary journeys.
- **Reflective Journaling:** Writing down one immediate boundary to implement this week.

Module 3: From Self-Care to Collective Care - 26 January 2026

In this module, participants learn how to foster a culture of care within movements, organisations, and peer networks. Moving away from commercialized, individual self-care toward community-based safety nets and organisational wellness.

- **Lecture:** Reading: Reviewing case studies of feminist organisations that successfully integrated rest into their operational budgets and policies.
- **Exercise:** Why "self-care" can feel like another chore on the to-do list. Defining collective care: Mutual aid, emotional checking-in protocols, and shared workloads.
- **Resource Share:** Launching a shared, crowdsourced document for community resources, therapists, and crisis lines.

Module 4: Building Your Sustainable Action Plan - 23 February 2026

Leave the course with a concrete, realistic roadmap for long-term resilience. Synthesizing the course into a personal and collective "Sustenance Plan" that outlasts the 4-week program.

- **Lecture:** Drafting a personal **Resilience Manifesto** (daily, weekly, and crisis-level care practices). Identifying accountability partners within the cohort.
- **Peer Review:** Pairing up to review each other's plans, ensuring they are realistic and not overly ambitious.

Course requirements

Participation: Attendance at three of the four live sessions, or completion of the equivalent self-paced modules and quizzes on Moodle.

Assignment: One assignment, set at the start of the course and due two weeks after Module 4 - a personal action plan to strengthen the culture of collective and self-care in your organisation and personal life?

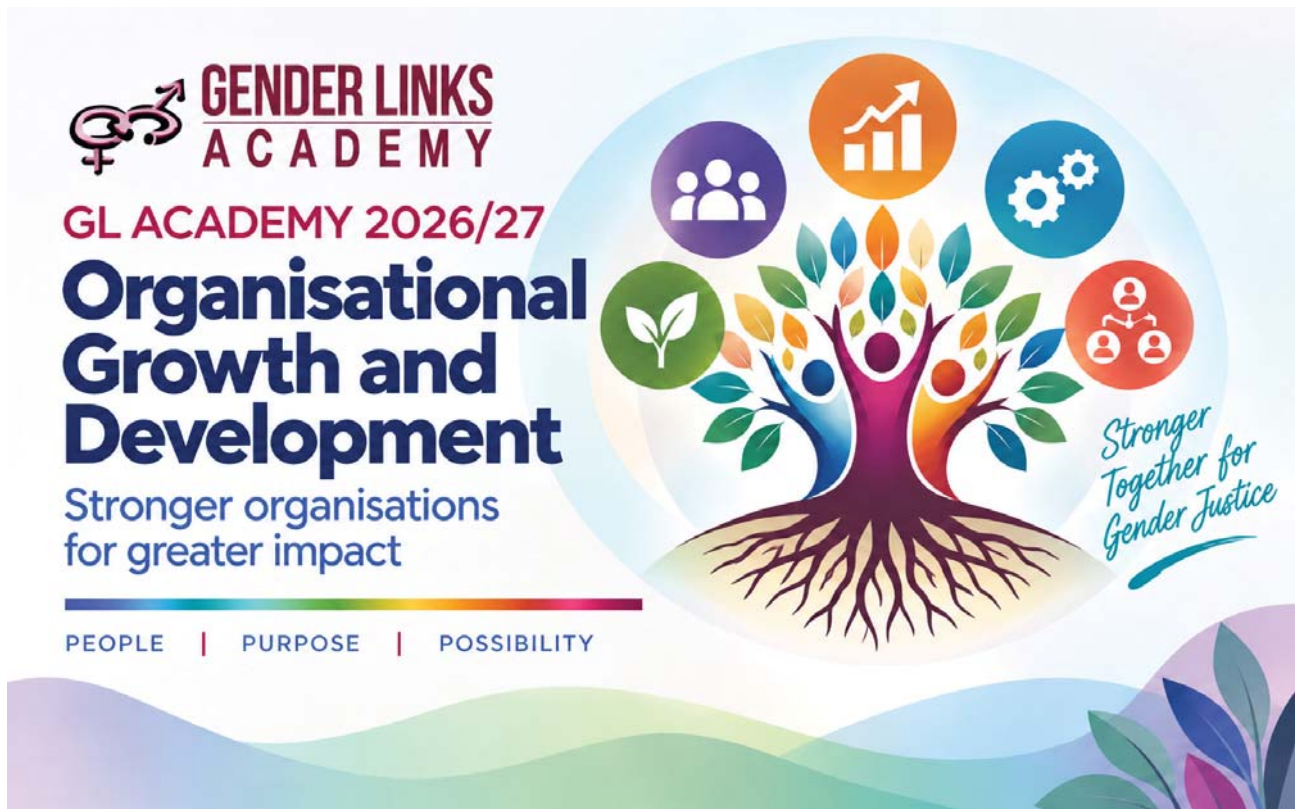
Course completion: 80% obtained on the assignment and the end-of-course quiz. Certificates are issued on the Moodle platform and at the GL Academy graduation on 8 March 2027.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning: A baseline self-assessment of confidence and use at the start of the course, and an endline assessment at the end.

Enrolment: Free for WVL and Marang Fund grantees and GL staff. Other participants pay a cost-recovery fee via PayFast of \$25.00 or equivalent.

Organisational growth and development

Course prospectus | October 2026 - March 2027



Moodle access: <https://academy.genderlinks.org.za/course/edit.php?id=16>

Course coordinators: Nomtriam Consultants

Objective: To strengthen organisational growth, development, sustainability and resilience of women's rights and LGBTIQ organisations against the backdrop of the anti-rights movement and backlash.

Rationale: Even in the age of social media when one person and a cell phone can spawn a whole movement, there is irrefutable evidence that we need strong organisations to build lasting and enduring movements. We as women's rights organisations need to model the change that we call on our governments to deliver. We need strong, well governed, accountable organisations, led by visionary feminist leaders who grow the next generation of leaders. Our organisations need to be underpinned by watertight systems that ensure judicious and accountable use of resources and enable us to keep fund raising. The organisations we build must be sustainable and able to endure any storm through deep roots; solid trunks and many branches that bear abundant fruit.

Who should attend: Staff, leaders and volunteers of women's rights and LGBTQI+ organisations, women human rights defenders and partners who want to strengthen their organisations.

Course dates and links

Date	Module	Zoom registration link
Thursday 29 Oct 2026	Module 1: Strengthening governance	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/odDPDL5ZRYiSHcnl04wv6g
Thursday 26 Nov 2026	Module 2: Leadership and accountability	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/XS7HRERQMaS3oRPN9Rjgg
Thursday 28 Jan 2027	Module 3: Building core operational systems that support sustainability	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/H22yRRFhSy2TplejPksDWg
Thursday 25 Feb 2027	Module 4: Improving Implementation Capacity and donor readiness	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/CwDY1JXjTlegsUWkV02CsQ
8 March 2027	GL Academy Graduation <i>Celebrating knowledge and learning!</i>	https://genderlinks-org-za.zoom.us/join/cexl3CarRkK_KV53_AKnvQ

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Course modules

Module 1: Strengthening governance - 29 October 2026

This module situates organisational strength and resilience in the context of good governance. Starting with the nature of an organisation's registration (which may vary), the module makes the case for a strong and representative board; that meets regularly and procedurally and exercises effective oversight. The module covers the relationship between the executive and the Board; the role of the founder and succession planning.

- **Lecture:** Good governance: walking the talk in our organisations.
Framed around: what gets forgotten in the governance and strategic leadership space.
- Opening frame: the "textbook" version of governance registration, board structure, oversight is rarely where organisations actually fail. What gets forgotten is what happens in the gaps between the textbook and daily practice.
- The treasurer trap: appointing a treasurer based on availability, friendship, or willingness to serve rather than financial literacy, audit experience, or fiduciary competence, and the real cost when the one person meant to catch financial risk can't read a balance sheet or flag an irregularity.
- Registration ≠ governance: legal registration (trust, NPC/NPO, association, cooperative) is a floor, not a ceiling; many organisations stop building governance capacity the moment the paperwork is filed.

- “Having a board” vs. “having an engaged board”: A board that exists on paper but doesn't meet, doesn't read the financials, and doesn't ask hard questions is not oversight, it's a liability.
- Skipped induction and conflict-of-interest declarations: For new board members the false assumption that people “just know” their fiduciary duties the moment they're appointed.
- Board composition frozen at founding: never revisited as the organisation grows, changes focus, or needs new expertise (financial, legal, HR, safeguarding).
- Succession planning deferred until crisis: rather than built in from the start for the executive director and for key board roles like chair and treasurer.
- The founder/executive-board boundary blurring: oversight either disappears (a rubber-stamp board) or curdles into micromanagement.
- **Reading:**
 - A short guide to board roles and responsibilities (fiduciary, strategic, generative).
 - A comparative piece on registration types available in the participants' country/region and their governance implications.
 - An article on founder's syndrome and how organisations move past it.
 - A practical guide to recruiting and vetting a financially competent treasurer or finance committee what to ask before appointing someone, and the red flags of an appointment made for convenience rather than competence.
- **Exercise:** Participants map their own board (or, if pre-formation, their intended board) against a simple matrix: skills present / skills missing, diversity of lived experience, frequency of meetings, and clarity of the founder's current role. They then answer directly: Who currently holds our treasurer / finance-oversight role, and were they chosen for competence or convenience? What would we need to check, or change, to close that gap? Groups identify their organisation's single biggest governance gap, treasurer competence or otherwise and one concrete step to close it in the next quarter.
- **Case Study:** A case of an organisation whose treasurer was appointed because he was the founder's brother-in-law and “good with numbers,” with no finance or audit background. Financial irregularities went unnoticed for two years until an external audit required by a new donor uncovered them. Groups discuss what governance checkpoint should have caught this earlier, what a competency-based appointment process for a treasurer looks like, and how a board recovers donor trust after a failure like this.

Module 2: Leadership and accountability - 26 November 2026

This module covers the role of leadership in organisations. What does a “good” leader look like? Can leadership be learned? Improved? Passed on? What are the consequences of bad leadership? How can this be corrected?

- **Lecture:** Leadership - the good, the bad and the ugly
 - Traits vs. practices: moving from “leaders are born” to “leadership is a set of learnable behaviors.”
 - What good leadership looks like in a resource-constrained, mission-driven organisation (transparency, delegation, protecting staff wellbeing, modeling the values the org preaches externally).
 - Common failure modes: founder-hero dynamics, conflict avoidance, favoritism, burnout passed down the chain.
 - Consequences of bad leadership: staff turnover, donor distrust, mission drift, replicated harm within organisations meant to prevent harm.

- Correction paths: 360 feedback, coaching, structural checks (shared decision-making, rotating chairs), and knowing when leadership change is necessary.
- **Reading:**
 - A framework on servant/feminist leadership models as an alternative to top-down hierarchy.
 - A short piece on how leadership can be developed and mentored rather than assumed innate.
 - An article on the specific leadership pitfalls common in mission-driven/activist organisations (martyrdom culture, "no one else can do it").
- **Exercise:** Participants complete a short self-assessment of their own leadership style, then pair up to give each other structured feedback using a "start / stop / continue" format. Groups then discuss: What is one piece of leadership behavior in our organisation that, if left uncorrected, would eventually cost us good people?
- **Case Study:** A case contrasting two organisations facing the same funding crisis, one led with transparency and shared decision-making, one led by concealment and top-down control and the different outcomes for staff retention and organisational survival.

Module 3: Systems for sustainability - 25 January 2027

In this modern era with a systems solution to every conceivable problem, how do we go about selecting the most efficient and effective solutions for our organisations? How can we make sure that the systems serve us and not the other way around? How can we learn from our peers, minimize costs and errors?

- **Lecture:** Systems That Serve Us Not the Other Way Around
 - The difference between a system (process, tool, or structure) and a solution to an actual organisational problem and why buying/adopting a system before defining the problem usually backfires.
 - A simple framework for evaluating any new system: What problem does this solve? What does it cost (money, time, training)? What happens if we stop using it? Who owns it once the "champion" leaves?
 - Common sustainability systems for small NGOs: financial controls, HR/people systems, M&E (monitoring & evaluation), knowledge management, data/donor management (CRM-type tools).
 - Avoiding "shiny object" syndrome: matching system complexity to organisational size and capacity, not to what a donor or peer organisation is using.
 - Building in redundancy so systems don't collapse when one key staff member leaves.
- **Reading**
 - A practical guide to right-sizing organisational systems for small and mid-sized NGOs.
 - A short case comparison of low-cost/no-cost tools vs. enterprise systems for common NGO functions (finance, M&E, donor management).
 - An article on knowledge management and institutional memory on how organisations avoid losing everything when one person exits.
- **Exercise: Panel of NGO Leaders.** A moderated panel where invited NGO leaders share the systems that have worked best for them what they tried, what failed, what they'd do differently. Participants prepare questions in advance based on their own organisation's current systems gaps, and close with a personal action item: one system to adopt, fix, or retire in the next six months.

Module 4: Managing donors and raising funds - 25 February 2027

- **Lecture:** Dicing with donors

- The power asymmetry inherent in donor relationships, and how to manage it without compromising mission or safety (particularly relevant for feminist/activist organisations working on contested issues).
- Diversifying funding streams to reduce the instability, grants, individual giving, membership models, social enterprise, in-kind support.
- Reading a grant/donor relationship honestly: alignment of values, reporting burden vs. grant size, and red flags (donors who want to dictate strategy or silence advocacy).
- Saying no: when a funding opportunity isn't worth the mission compromise it requires.

- **Reading:**

- A short guide to diversified fundraising strategies for small mission-driven organisations.
- An article on donor power dynamics and how to negotiate reporting requirements and restricted funding.
- A piece specifically on funding instability in feminist/women's rights organisations and strategies used globally to build more resilient funding bases.

- **Exercise:** Participants map their organisation's current funding sources on a simple pie chart, then identify: What % relies on a single donor or grant? What would happen if that funding ended tomorrow? Groups brainstorm one realistic new funding stream to explore in the next year, and draft three sentences of a "non-negotiables" statement the things their organisation will not compromise on regardless of a donor's offer.

Course requirements

Participation: Attendance at three of the four live sessions, or completion of the equivalent self-paced modules and quizzes on Moodle.

Assignment: Use your Organisational Development Score to develop an Institutional Effectiveness strategy for your organisation.

Course completion: 80% obtained on the assignment and the end-of-course quiz. Certificates are issued on the Moodle platform and at the GL Academy graduation on 8 March 2027.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning: The course will use the Organisational Development Score Card to assess baselines; measure progress and set target for the future.

Enrolment: Free for WVL and Marang Fund grantees and GL staff. Other participants pay a cost-recovery fee via PayFast of \$25.00 or equivalent.