



Annual Report

2023-24

Vision

Gender Links (GL) is committed to an inclusive, equal and just society in which women and girls in all their diversities exercise their voice and choice in accordance with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and related regional, continental and global instruments.

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About GL

Gender Links (GL) is a leading Southern African Women's Rights Organisation whose work has been widely acclaimed across the continent. Two times winner of the *Mail and Guardian* "**Investing in the Future Award**", GL has also received **Top Women, Drivers of Change** and **African Union** awards for its outstanding contribution to advancing women's rights in this sub-region.

Formed in **March 2001**, GL is headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, with offices in ten Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including a Lusophone base in Madagascar.

Described in an evaluation as a "small organisation with a large footprint," GL has a web of close to 600 partners, with whom it works to promote gender equality.

At the policy level, GL coordinates the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that campaigned for the adoption of this unique instrument in 2008. GL and 25 partners produce an annual Barometer tracking progress towards attaining gender equality in SADC.

In its gender and governance programme GL spearheads the 50/50 campaign in the region. GL has played a key role in putting gender on the local government agenda in ten SADC countries through 432 councils that have joined the Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government.

Pioneering work on the Sixteen Days of Activism campaign in the gender justice programme has expanded to include 365 day action plans to end gender violence. GL has pioneered a way of measuring gender violence tested in seven SADC countries, and used to strengthen 365 day National and Local Action Plans for Ending Gender Violence.

GL has worked with **2000 survivors of gender violence to reclaim their lives through entrepreneurship training** linked to local economic development. The Sunrise Campaign because of the fresh start and new hope that this has given participants, GL has mounted a global campaign to raise funds for sustainable solutions to GBV that change lives and deliver agency.

GL Services, GL's visionary social entrepreneurship programme helps to sustain the organisation and contributes to the GL Future Fund. The GL Cottages and Conferencing offers a place of peace and reflection for dozens of like-minded organisations. Over the last two years GL Advisory Services has offered gender integration support to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Africa team as well as Water Aid Southern Africa. The GL Grants Management Unit, established in 2019, manages Global Affairs Canada's Women Voice and Leadership South Africa Fund and the Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund supported by Amplify Change. Together with Mannion Daniels in the UK and ARROW in Malaysia, GL leads Women of the South Speak Out, an initiative funded by the UK government to amplify the voice of young women advocates in the global south.



Foreword - Chair



This report tells the story of challenges, resilience and endurance. In November 2023, the GL Board and Association held a joint meeting against the backdrop of shrinking regional funding, and the closure of four country offices in early 2023, leading to uncertainties and personal hardships for long-serving staff and associates. GL thanks all those who have continued to champion our shared vision despite these uncertainties.

On a positive note, GL's Zimbabwe and Mauritius offices are now self-sustaining. GL's Botswana and Lesotho offices show promise of revival. GL's service units, including Grant Making, Advisory Services, and the GL Cottages and Conferencing have demonstrated growth and resilience. A Partner Consultation on Organisational Design and Sustainability ahead of our joint meeting, helped us to rethink our strategy. We listened to advice from three regional organisations: Women and Law in Southern Africa; Media Institute of Southern Africa and REPSSI, as well as three international organisations, the Irene M. Stahler Foundation; Amplify Change and Action Aid. Lessons shared by International NGOs included the importance of shifting power; not being overly concerned with northern norms and models; drawing on our wealth of networking experience; succession planning and involving a new generation of young leaders who have different ways of working; keeping it simple; not allowing the past to compromise the future.

From our regional partners we learned of the dangers of regional hubs collapsing altogether; premature exiting of founders without the vision being passed on; membership structures that can become unwieldy; the importance of local grounding; and the dangers of fiscal impropriety. Speakers underscored the long time it takes to build; the short time it takes to destroy; and the even longer time to rebuild especially where reputation is affected. Regional partners emphasised the advantages of working regionally in Southern Africa in social justice advocacy, without necessarily having offices in every country.

GL reaffirmed its commitment to several foundational principles: transparency; open and honest communication; partnerships; collaboration; decentralisation; ownership; agency; trust; synergies; networking; mentorship, continuous learning, peer linking and sharing. Our meeting covered five areas, on which the Board passed key resolutions. These are:



Vision, mission and strategy: GL reaffirmed its vision of a region in which women and girls in all their diversity attain equality in accordance with regional and global instruments that we have campaigned for. We recognised, however, that our programmes have become fragmented; that we need to build synergies from local to national to regional and global level by piecing together the funding we have through a more networked structure internally. GL agreed on a paradigm shift from a “bird with two wings” to a tree with many branches.

GL recognised that modes of delivery are changing. GL no longer delivers all its work directly. Increasingly the work is delivered through grantee partners, with GL playing a supportive role. Through its advisory services, GL's work increasingly responds to needs identified by partners rather than by GL. These are all positive signs of greater ownership, shifting of the power, and new possibilities for movement building.

People power: GL has 48 staff and associates across Southern Africa who have, on average, served the organisation for nearly eight years each. GL took to heart the recommendation that the relative autonomy and agency demonstrated by country offices be replicated at unit and personal level in all GL clusters as part of succession planning.

Organisational design: The Board resolved to take a measured but deliberate approach to registering local offices in Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Botswana, and to updating GL's Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) in Lesotho (already registered locally). This will happen over the coming year.



GL Country office staff are the foot soldiers of our work.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Governance: GL adopted and will lodge an updated Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) that clarifies its two tier structure, the Association (retiring Board Members, founders and new members by application) and the Board, which is appointed by the Association. The Association shall henceforth be chaired by rotation.

The Board thanked Céline Marie Yolande (Madagascar); Marie Annick Savripène (Mauritius) and Chigedze Chinyepi (Botswana) who indicated that they will not be renewing their terms when these lapse at the end of 2023. GL welcomed UK Board Member Sarah Mistry as Deputy Chair, and thanked her for the role she has played in promoting the work of the organisation internationally.

Finance: The Board appointed Mathabiso Chamane as Chair of the Audit Committee in the

financial year commencing April 2024 with a handover period to August 2024 when Adrian Dowie retires. The Board thanked Dowie for his service to GL over the last nine years.

May I take this opportunity to thank our partners, my fellow Board Members, the GL Association, and Staff and Associates of Gender Links for their tireless efforts in promoting gender equality and justice. We count down to 2030 with a renewed vision and energy, a tree with many branches, one stem and deep roots. *Womandla!*

Emily Brown
Chair, Gender Links

Executive Summary

by Debrah Mukuku and Colleen Lowe Morna

Gender Links (GL), a leading Southern African women's rights organisation, has made significant strides in advancing gender equality despite financial and structural challenges. This report highlights GL's resilience, strategic shifts, and programmatic impact across governance, advocacy, grant-making, gender justice, and economic empowerment.

Political and Socio-Economic Landscape

Southern Africa's political context remains volatile, with corruption, economic instability, and democratic erosion in key countries. Armed conflicts persist in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique, exacerbating displacement and gender-based violence (GBV). Despite these challenges, progress in LGBTQ+ rights was noted in Mauritius, Namibia, and Eswatini, while Tanzania regressed with harsher laws.

Organisational Resilience and Strategic Direction

GL faced financial constraints leading to the closure of four country offices but successfully sustained operations in Zimbabwe and Mauritius, with Botswana and Lesotho showing signs of recovery. A restructured strategy prioritises decentralisation, local partnerships, and increased ownership by regional stakeholders.

Gender Justice and Advocacy

GL's **Local Action for Gender Justice (LAGJ)** programme engaged over 400 local authorities in gender mainstreaming, with Zimbabwe leading in implementation. The **Feminist Grant Making Unit** administered multiple funds, supporting grassroots advocacy and movement-building for gender rights. The **Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSA Fund)** provided 38 grants, focusing on SRHR, GBV, LGBTQ+ rights, and economic justice.

Women's Political Participation (WPP)

GL's advocacy contributed to a **30% quota for women in Zimbabwe's local government**, increasing female representation from 14% to 33%. However, the 2024 **WPP Africa Barometer** shows only a **1% increase** in women's parliamentary representation across Africa (from 25% to 26%), indicating slow progress. Capacity-building efforts continue in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Safe Spaces

GL's **"I Am a Man, I Can"** campaign engaged 400 men in person and reached 200,000 online,

promoting positive masculinities. The **Safe Haven Halfway Home in Mauritius** remains the only transitory shelter for GBV survivors, accommodating 310 individuals since 2017. South Africa is developing a **GBV Index** to enhance data-driven policymaking.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

The formation of the **Safe Abortion Alliance Southern Africa (SAASA)** aims to improve access to safe abortion. Youth-led initiatives influenced **SRHR policies in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Lesotho**, while **menstrual hygiene programmes** in South Africa led to government partnerships for school-based interventions.

Economic and Climate Justice

GL integrated gender-responsive budgeting in Zimbabwe, requiring **all 92 local authorities to submit gender-based budget statements**. The **Sunrise Campaign** in South Africa and Zimbabwe empowered **200+ women entrepreneurs**, providing business training and infrastructure support. Climate resilience projects include **renewable energy, waste management, and climate-smart agriculture**.

Gender and Media Initiatives

GL trained journalists in **Women's Political Participation (WPP) reporting**, combatting stereotypes in media narratives. A **Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Media Training** in Zimbabwe enhanced policy advocacy. The launch of the **Bellona Mobile App** supports women's leadership development and career growth.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact

GL conducted **737 events, reaching 32,012 participants**, with **69% women, 30% men, and 1% gender non-conforming individuals**. The **Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund accounted for 45% of all GL events**. Mauritius hosted the **largest number of activities (39% of total events)**, with the majority of participants being under 18 years old.

Conclusion and Future Outlook

GL remains committed to gender justice through policy advocacy, capacity-building, and grant-making. Future priorities include expanding regional networks, strengthening economic justice programmes, enhancing research on gender-based issues, and leveraging digital tools for advocacy. By 2030, GL envisions a region where women and girls exercise full agency and choice, shaping policies that impact their lives.

SADC Regional Context 2023-2024

by Susan Tolmay



Countries worldwide are grappling with a myriad of challenges, including the far-reaching impacts of climate change, the erosion of democratic freedoms, and armed conflicts and warfare. This is also true in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

Overall, the political context in Southern Africa is characterised by a mix of stable democracies, such as Botswana and Namibia, and countries facing challenges related to corruption, economic instability, and political repressions, such as Zimbabwe and Eswatini. Socio-economically, the region continues to grapple with poverty, inequality, and governance issues and faces ongoing political and economic uncertainties. DRC and Mozambique are both experiencing increasing war and conflict.

Six SADC countries (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eswatini, Lesotho Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe) held national or local **elections** in 2023 and the first half of 2024. **Zimbabwe** President of the ruling ZANU PF party, Mnangagwa Emmerson, won 53% of the election vote in August 2023. Delays, rigging accusations, and voter

suppression marred elections.¹ In **Eswatini**, political parties are banned, and political dissent continues to be restricted, with no accountability for past crackdowns on pro-democracy protesters. The elections are unlikely to offer any political change to the kingdom, with the MPs serving in a purely advisory role to the monarch.

Lesotho's local government elections in 2023 saw the lowest voter turnout of 26%, showing that voters are choosing not to exercise their democratic right to have a direct say in who will make the most impact in their local town and village. **Mozambique's** 2023 local elections led to contested results, post-electoral violence, and concerns about impartiality.² The **DRC** held elections in December 2023, which resulted in the re-election of President Felix Tshisekedi. However, the opposition and some civil society groups called for the election to be rerun due to massive logistical problems questioning the outcome's validity.³

South Africa's 2024 elections marked a significant shift from one-party dominance to a multi-party democracy, with the ruling party losing its outright majority and negotiating a Government of National Unity with smaller parties.



Voice and Choice Partners, GL Staff and Board.

Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/27/zimbabwes-president-mnangagwa-wins-second-term-opposition-rejects-result>

² <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/fraudulent-municipal-elections-cripple-democracy-in-mozambique>

³ <https://www.africanews.com/2023/12/31/president-felix-tshisekedi-declared-winner-of-drc-election/>

The elections yielded mixed results for **Women's Political Participation (WPP)**. Eswatini saw the biggest increase at the national level, while Zimbabwe and South Africa saw decreases of one and three percentage points. At the local level, Zimbabwe increased WPP by 19 percentage points following the implementation of a quota. In Lesotho, WPP continues to decline despite the use of a legislated quota at the local level.

There is growing societal acceptance of same-sex relationships and **LGBTI rights** in the SADC region, with over half of the SADC states do not criminalise same-sex relationships between consenting adults. 2023 saw some significant developments in this area. In October 2023, The **Mauritian** Supreme Court ruled that section 250 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes anal sex between two consenting adult men, violates the constitution. The court held that the threat of prosecution for homosexual men justified the need for protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation.⁴



LGBTQ+ community members take part in an Eswatini Pride event in Mbabane. The country saw its first Pride event in 2018. Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

Namibia's Supreme Court ruled that the country must recognise same-sex marriages validly concluded outside the country. In **Eswatini**, the Supreme Court ruled that the Registrar's decision to decline the registration of the LGBTQI association was unlawful and ordered the Minister to reconsider the application. This represents a significant

development in LGBTQI rights in the SADC region. On the other hand, MPs in **Tanzania** are calling for even harsher laws, including the death penalty for same-sex sexual activity.

The DRC and Mozambique continue experiencing ongoing **armed conflicts and political instability** for decades. In the **DRC**, conflict has escalated, and heavy fighting between the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) and M23 has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes, with over 7 million people internally displaced. Both the armed groups and government forces have committed numerous atrocities, including massacres, sexual violence, and pillaging; the government has cracked down on opposition members and the media, restricting fundamental liberties and arresting party officials.⁵ In **Mozambique**, the violent insurgency in its Cabo Delgado province since 2017 has led to widespread displacement, loss of lives, and a humanitarian crisis, with over 100,000 people displaced.⁶

The Southern African region is particularly susceptible to the impacts of the **climate crisis**. Climate shocks and extreme weather events, like cyclones and tropical storms, are becoming common in **Mozambique** and **Malawi**. The 2023-2024 El Niño has been one of the strongest on record, bringing below-average rainfall between October 2023 and February 2024 in southern and central parts of Mozambique and Malawi.⁷ Tropical Cyclone Freddy, which struck Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Madagascar in February and March 2023, was the longest-lasting tropical cyclone ever recorded worldwide, lasting 37 days. It was also the third-deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere.⁸ These extreme weather events have had a devastating impact on these countries' infrastructure and overall economy, especially the agriculture sector. These events have also resulted in the death and displacement of hundreds of thousands of individuals. Destroyed crops and drought conditions have led to significant food insecurity and malnutrition.

⁴ <https://www.africanliberty.org/2023/10/13/like-mauritius-other-african-countries-should-decriminalize-homosexuality/>
⁵ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo>
⁶ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mozambique/overview>
⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/mozambique-drought-04-2024-drought-1-2024-05-22>
⁸ www.zitamar.com/climate-change-mozambique-impact

Pathways to Change

In accordance with its Theory of Change, GL has several pathways for achieving its vision - a region in which women and girls in all their diversity exercise their voice and choice. These include action at local level; feminist grant making (local, national and regional level); global advocacy as well as demand-driven advisory services.



Local Action for Gender Justice

by Priscilla Maposa



The Local Action for Gender Justice (LAGJ) programme driven by the Centres of Excellence (COE) for gender in local government has been at the core of promoting gender equality at the local level in Southern Africa.

To date, Gender Links (GL) has worked with over 400 local authorities in 10 Southern African countries. The COE programme which focuses on gender mainstreaming at the local level has gone through an evolutionary process since 2010.

Local authorities developed Gender Action Plans (GAPs) in line with the targets of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, Sustainable Development Goals and other national, regional and international legislative frameworks. However, due to different country contexts and the nature of funding, the COE programme has slowed down in other countries but it is important to note that all other Gender Links programming taking place in those countries is leveraging on the COE work. Zimbabwe is the only country still implementing the COE programme.

Below is a breakdown of the LAGJ work taking place in Gender Links.

	Local Government COEs	Economic Justice and Gender-Based Violence	50/50
Botswana			X
Lesotho			
Mauritius			X
South Africa		X	
Zimbabwe	X	X	X



Former Ambassador of Sweden to Zimbabwe, Asa Pehrson, and Former Minister of Local Government & Public Works, July Moyo, launching the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) toolkit. Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya

The LAGJ programme has maintained its strong partnerships with local authorities at the coalface of development. Zimbabwe is the only country where the COE programme in its most comprehensive form is currently being rolled out. Over the last 14 years, the COE programme has evolved to become the hub and spoke model of programming where best performing local authorities are providing mentorship to other local authorities in their provinces.

The hub and spoke programme has resulted in local authorities taking ownership of the programme which is key for sustainability. In addition, the programme has resulted in a lot of competition and enthusiasm amongst local authorities as they compete for the hub function which is rotational. In 2022 Gender Links in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government & Public Works (MLGPW) developed a Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) toolkit to assist local authorities in mainstreaming gender into budgets.

Through this work, the MLGPW has made it mandatory for all 92 local authorities to submit GRB statements as part of their budgets starting in 2024. This is a milestone development which will assist local authorities in the allocation of resources towards gender initiatives.

South Africa and Zimbabwe continued to cascade the Economic Justice (EJ) programme focusing on entrepreneurship and life skills development. In South Africa, 200 women entrepreneurs from 10 COE local authorities are part of the Sunrise Campaign, an upscaling of the previous programme that ended in 2022. In Zimbabwe, the programme has grown to include infrastructure development. Zimbabwe's EJ programme seeks to reduce poverty through 5 value chains including Arts and Culture, Clean Energy, Health and Sanitation, Horticulture and Waste Management. 12 COE local authorities are part of the programme which has an emphasis on infrastructure development.

Botswana, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe continued to implement the Women's Political Participation (WPP) programme. In 2023 Zimbabwe had an election which saw the implementation of the 30% local government quota. As a result, the representation of women in local government rose from 14% to 33% paving way for continued lobbying and advocacy for equality. Botswana and Mauritius focused on the capacity-building of women and youths in preparation for the 2024 elections. These efforts are critical in achieving gender equality and promoting WPP in the region. Botswana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa will be conducting various elections in 2024.

Despite challenges, the COE programme continues to evolve, adapting to the needs of each country. The value of local authority involvement is clear, and we look forward to continued progress towards gender equality.



Zimba Rural District Council community group with their products during a site visit by the Embassy of Sweden in Harare.

Photo: Tapiwa Zvaraya



Feminist grant making

by Tinashe Chipwa



One of the fruits of advocacy efforts for increased funding for Women's Rights is new possibilities for capable WROs from the global south to become implementing partners for larger funds.

Global Affairs Canada took the first leap of faith, appointing GL to manage its Women Voice and Leadership (WVL) Fund in South Africa from July 2019 to March 2023. Amplify Change, an SRHR fund backed by several northern donors and foundations followed suit.



Thenjiwe Ncobo (left) in the Amplify Change booth at Women Deliver.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna



GL is one of us. As a small organisation we take heart knowing that Gender Links started out just like us, but through vision, hard work, and commitment grew to be the organisation that funds us today, and is a leading advocate for gender equality in Southern Africa.

Thenjiwe Ncobo, Director of Incema, a VCSAF grantee that targets childhood experiences of GBV in the KwaZulu Natal province of South Africa

Gender Links' six year journey with Amplify Change (AC) from grantee to partner reflects AC's commitment to shifting power from north to south. Indeed, in a side event at the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali, Rwanda in July 2023, grantees of the Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSAF) that GL manages on behalf of AC affirmed the bold move by a northern funder to devolve responsibility to a middle size Women's Rights organisation in the global South.

Initially a networking then strategic AC grantee, in April 2022 the [GL Grant Making Unit \(GMU\)](#) secured the highly competitive AC Partnership Grant to manage its funds in Southern Africa. The GBP1.5 million VCSAF, which runs until March 2025, aims to build strong local organisations and coalitions that advocate for legislative, policy, and attitude changes; enhance delivery of quality SRHR services; improve the management, programming and sustainability of SRHR organisations, particularly those representing youth, marginalised women and girls; support dynamic in-person and virtual learning and sharing among grantees and across AC partners globally.

From May to June 2022, GL conducted a [mapping exercise](#) of 61 SRHR organizations in Southern Africa through the Alliance showing that 45% of the organizations had yearly budgets of less than \$50,000. Only about 10% had budgets over \$1,000,000. With the guidance of AC, GL put out a call for two types of grants: Movement Building, worth GBP 50,000 over two years open to all 16 SADC countries; and Opportunity grant worth GBP10,000 over two years was for smaller organisations in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, where GL has strong institutional bases.

Country	Opportunity	Movement Building
South Africa	15	1
Zimbabwe	9	1
Lesotho	5	
Tanzania		3
DRC		1
Malawi		1
Madagascar		1
Eswatini		1
Total	29	9

GL received 154 applications and, with the help on an independent Grants Selection Committee awarded 38 grants; nine movement building and 38 opportunity grants working across seven distinct themes: LGBTQIA+; Menstrual health; Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights; Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE); Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights; Advocacy and Safe Abortion; Gender Based Violence; HIV and AIDS; Sex work. The grantees are spread across

eight Southern African countries: 15 in South Africa; nine in Zimbabwe; five in Lesotho; three in Tanzania and one each in Malawi, Eswatini, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Tanzania.

Year one	Year two	
April 2022 - March 2023	April - December 2023	January - March 2024 ↕
Grant Making at regional level	Grant Making and Reporting ↕	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Calls • Shortlisting, Adjudication, Due diligence • Barometer Launch • 38 Grants Awarded • On boarding • Grants disbursed • Training & technical support • Upgrading systems, templates, reports (multi - currency) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training & technical support • Women Deliver Conference • Reporting • Reviewing of report • Tranche 2 disbursements • VCSA Learning & Sharing Summit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, on the job support • AC donor monitoring visit to GL • Reporting • Tranche 3 disbursements

As illustrated in the graphic, full roll out began in January 2023. By February 2024, GL had launched a baseline Voice and Choice Barometer; disbursed 54% of the funds. Key successes include:

The project aims to build the capacity of a core aim of the project especially for the smaller opportunity grantees. GL offered targeted face-to-face and online training to grantees on specific areas identified through the organisational assessments. GL conducted a one-week virtual communication training in April. AC suggested pivoting surplus grant funds into scholarship for the most engaged team in creating a joint campaign

to attend the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali in July. GL engaged the services of FLOW communication to deliver the training and decide on the winning team. Grantees in the GBV team from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho won the award.

Women Deliver Conference
Described by one grantee as a “feast of ideas” the Women Deliver Conference proved to be a major highlight for the ten GBV grantees providing valuable insights, empowerment, networking opportunities, and emotional impact through survivor stories.



Being at the Women Deliver Conference with 6300 delegates from all over the world opened many new insights for this group, and equipped them with new skills and resolve as they return to their bases in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

Thenjiwe Ngcobo from **Incema in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**, applied for a passport for the first time. Mathapelo Rammole from **YWCA Lesotho** shook with emotion as she recalled getting on an aeroplane and holding a US dollar note for the first time.

Khensani Mabasa from **Life Savers Foundation in Limpopo, South Africa**, embodied the spirit of "Women Deliver", refusing to allow being six months pregnant to slow her down. Her highlights included meeting Women Deliver Chair and former South African Vice President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, also former executive director of UNWomen. Mlambo-Ngcuka now heads the Umlambo Foundation promoting girls education. Mabasa and Mlambo-Ngcuka agreed to work together in the remote Bembe district of Limpopo.

Tinotenda Matenda from **Roots Africa in Zimbabwe** felt the "weight of responsibility" from his team back home who expected him to "deliver results". Each time he made a new contact, he set up a virtual meeting with his director, making sure that every conversation created meaningful new linkages. He also made his voice heard in the youth space, declaring that "young people are partners, not beneficiaries.. we are not a consultation factory; we are the future." He left inspired by an almost paperless conference, with registration done in minutes using QR codes.

Luckson Bashoma from **Matabeleland Aids Council in Zimbabwe** has a degree in environmental science and followed the climate justice track during the conference. He is interested in the nexus between gender; climate and SRHR justice. As one of the two young men on the team, he also took an interest in the men at the conference. He

will contribute a blog on what men need to deliver - watch this space!

For all the grantees, Women Deliver offered the opportunity to meet current and prospective funders. The VCSAFund grantees spent time at the AmplifyChange booth in the Kivu tent, networking with the Chair of the AmplifyChange Board Narmeen Hamid. Latanya Mapp Frett President and CEO of [Global Fund for Women](#) met individually with grantees and offered valuable advice: always talk about your work first, then about money! Leonora Tima, Director of **Kwanele in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa**, worked the donor circuit, collecting business cards and becoming "known." This start-up NGO recently won an award in San Francisco for an app to use AI in reporting cases of GBV. "What you want in the end is that if there is a list of 20,000 your name stands out!" Indeed, no coincidence that some of the grantees who had applied for funds from the GFW and heard nothing started to get responses during the four days!



Fundraising

A grantees reported having been able to raise £12 2,527.87 as a result of VCSA. These are new funds organisations managed to access as a result of the work they have done through the VCSA fund and highlights the multiplier effect of the VCSA fund and how organisation sustainability

may be attained. In addition, funded organisations managed to raise £7,130.84 in In-kind support in the first 6 months of implementation. These range from free venues, catering, transportation, materials and human resources support rendered.



We learned late last night that we are receiving \$100k funding from the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation. When I was at Women Deliver, I was approached by Liz McGovern, and she asked to connect on LinkedIn; from there she set up a meeting and asked us to submit a concept note on the work we are doing. I wanted to thank you. They would have never heard us speak if it had not been for GL and the opportunity to attend WD. This funding is a huge boost in us being able to maintain the staff we have hired. Also, the funding is going to go towards a Rape Toolkit being built into our technology, with a focus on SRHR.

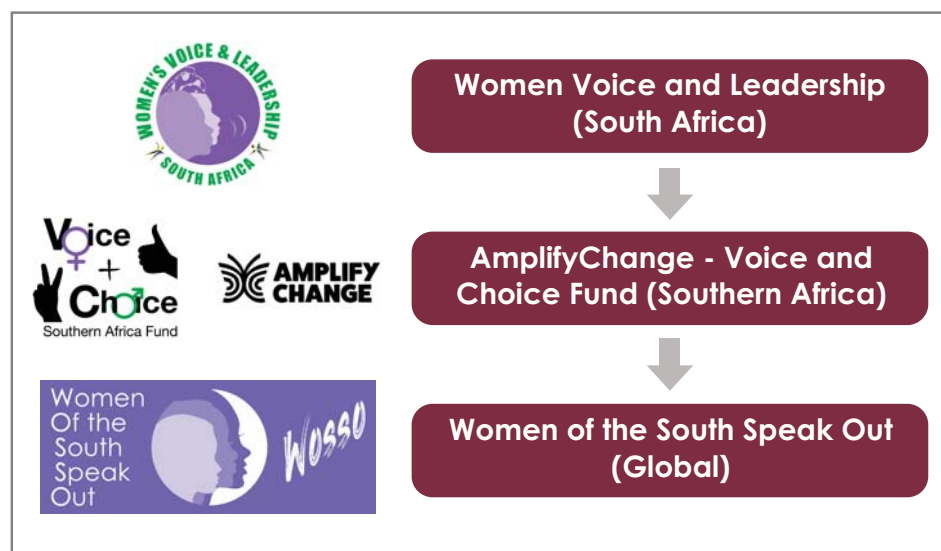
Leonora Tima, Director of Kwanele in KwaZulu Natal

I cannot express enough gratitude - *Leonora Tima, Kwanele Bringing Justice to Women*

Challenges

- In Tanzania, Eagle Wings Youth Initiative, a LGBTQI movement building grantee, faced community backlash, accusing the organisation of promoting homosexuality among young people.
- Climate change is affecting grantees. For example, in Malawi Cyclone Freddy hit the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre's project site in Phalombe, which was hit by, causing mudslides that covered entire villages.
- Grantees advocating for sex work encountered challenges such as intimate partner violence, conflicts among sex workers over clients, and discrimination against transgender sex workers by female sex workers.
- GL faced difficulties making GBP payments to some grantees due to their lack of bank accounts capable of receiving foreign currencies. For example, Salama Foundation in Tanzania experienced a three-month delay in fund receipt. Some grantees struggled with GL's results and budget templates, while poor internet access hindered online reporting.

Looking to the future



WVL catapulted GL into grant making at national level; AC into grant making at regional level. Since then, GL partnered with ARROW in Malaysia and Mannion Daniels in the UK to establish the Women of the South Speak out Consortium, which will oversee a portion of the FCDO's women's rights grant-making. The GMU now operates at both

national and global levels. AC played a decisive role in positioning a capable Southern Women's Rights Organisation to manage northern funds at regional, now at global level, building our systems, knowledge and skills. This partnership has played a key role in our sustainability, and in helping us to lift as we lead. Long may our partnership last!



Global Advocacy

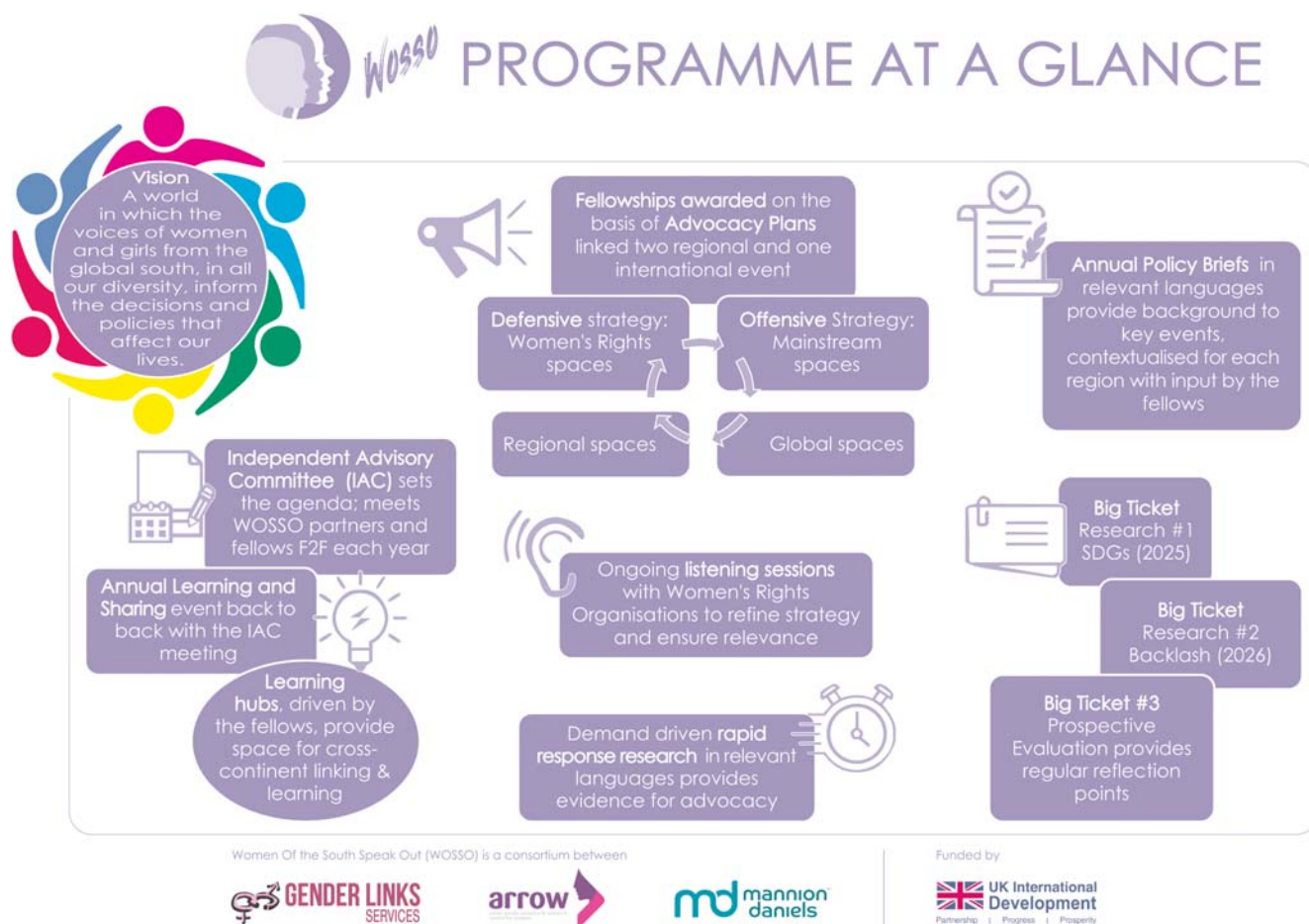
by Tabettha Kanengoni-Malinga



In 2023, GL secured a bid by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), to advance gender equality through support to Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) and Women's Movements in the Global South.

GL leads the Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) consortium with the Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), a WRO headquartered in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, and a UK-based consultancy firm, MannionDaniels.

The WOSSO project that runs from 2023 to 2027 commenced with a co-creation period from May to December 2023. This phase aimed to develop 12 implementation deliverables for components B (advocacy) and C (research and knowledge management). Component A, focusing on core, multi-year, flexible support and capacity building for WROs, was awarded to The Equality Fund, which operates independently of the consortium but maintains synergies facilitated by FCDO. The Equality Fund is a member of WOSSO's Independent Advisory Committee (IAC).



WOSSO envisions a world in which the voices of women and girls from the Global South, in all our diversity, inform the decisions and policies that affect our lives.

The Independent Advisory Committee (IAC) comprises seasoned women's rights advocates

from the Global South who provide strategic advice, independent challenge, and quality assurance. The IAC includes a young activist, Kapwani Kavenuke from Tanzania, reflecting the programme's commitment to mentorship and intergenerational leadership. The WOSSO leadership team includes Colleen Lowe Morna

(GL's Special Advisor and Team Lead), Sivananthi Thanenthiran (ARROW's Executive Director), and Rolla Khadduri (MD's Head of Gender and Social Development).

The **WOSSO fellowship** programme is pivotal in GL's investment in future leaders. The 18-month programme provides pathways for regional and global advocacy, feminist funding, networking, and learning. Targeting young women aged 18 to 35 in the Global South, WOSSO will offer fellowships to over 200 young women in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

GL oversees the Sub-Saharan Africa Fellowships, with a total of 50 fellows targeted. Fellows participate in various regional and global conferences, including the SADC Summit, Beijing Regional preparatory meetings, the AWID conference in Thailand, and the CSW Beijing +30 conference. Fellows also develop advocacy plans and receive grants to implement these plans, often focusing on some of GL's key outcome areas: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Economic and Climate Justice, and Women's Political Participation (WPP).

During the co-creation period, WOSSO conducted a comprehensive mapping exercise to understand the landscape of WROs and networks in the Global South, followed by listening sessions to inform WOSSO's advocacy and **research** strategies. GL leads the "Big Ticket" Research on Backlash against women's rights, ARROW focuses on SDG indicators,

and MD is conducting a longitudinal analysis of the entire project, focusing on support for women's rights. Annual and rapid response research priorities are also part of GL's research agenda, to inform advocacy and vice versa.

The **finance and operations** work stream has developed stringent policy statements, including safeguarding, travel, anti-corruption, and data protection. The policies developed by WOSSO triggered GL to relook at its policies and an exercise to update GL's policies is underway.

Challenges include managing time zones, differing leadership styles, corporate cultures and a tight budget relative to the broad objectives. To ensure smooth relations, GL initiated a Ways of Working (WOW) document.

Key **priorities** for the coming year include:

- **Strengthening Global South Networks:** Enhancing partnerships with local organisations in the Asia-Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, MENA regions, and LATAC.
- **Expanding Fellowship Programs:** Increasing the number of Fellows and providing more comprehensive support.
- **Enhancing Research Capabilities:** Conducting in-depth research to support GL's advocacy efforts.
- **Leveraging Global Platforms:** Actively participating in global forums and conferences to amplify the voices of women from the Global South.





Advisory Services

by Kevin Chiramba and Susan Tolmay

As part of its sustainability efforts, GL has a demand driven gender advisory services arm that responds to requests across Africa and even globally. Gender Links Advisory Services (GLAS) is a pathway to change that leverages off GL's vast knowledge resources, contributing to impact and visibility. In 2023, GLAS continued work agreements with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Africa Office, Water Aid Southern Africa and secured a further contract with the Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan).

The Gates Foundation (Africa)



The initial phase of the framework agreements with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), now the Gates Foundation, concluded in August 2023.

However, the Gates Foundation's Africa Regional Office (ARO) extended GL's contract by an additional year, from November 2023 to October 2024. GL partnered with Triple C, an African gender firm with associates in Kenya and Nigeria, to deliver on the contract.

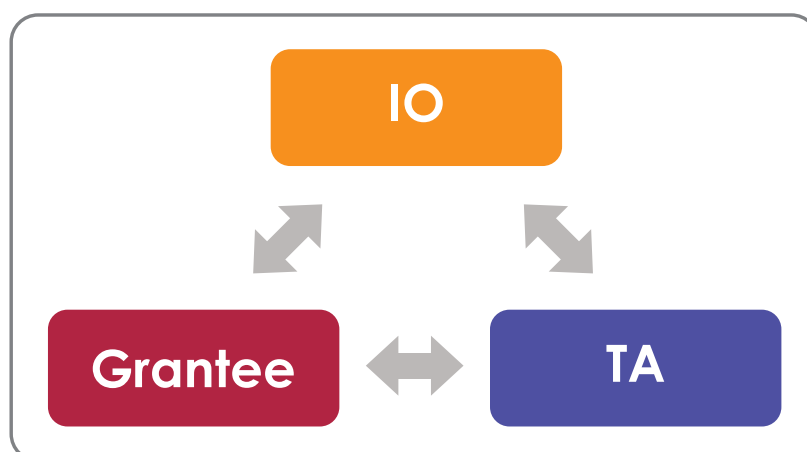
With bases in South Africa, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya, the Foundation has \$5 billion worth of projects focusing mainly on health in Africa. The key tool used by the Foundation is a Gender Marker that rates investment as either gender unintentional, intentional or transformative, based on a set of pre-determined criteria.

The ARO aims to ensure that all investments use the gender marker and that 70% of new investments are gender intentional or

transformative by 2030. In the second phase GL set out to provide advisory services to 50 new investments. GL worked with an IO at the Foundation on a unique delivery model that involved IO's, grantees and Technical Assistance (TA) working together to use the Marker at an earlier stage in the Investment Design. GL developed an outcome-tracking tool that focuses on five key outcome areas: Conducting Gender Analysis; Integrating Gender into the Results Framework; Building Gender Expertise and Capacity; Risk Identification and Mitigation and Budget Integration.

GL also offered face-to-face gender training for grantees in Nigeria, and developed an Action Learning Community approach to capacity building with health Supply Chains in East Africa. This involved delivering three gender training modules virtually to a group of grantees who went to to develop a dynamic learning community.

During this phase GL developed a Gender Integration Guidance note; two process guides on the three way conversation between grantees, TA and IOs as the Action Learning Communities as well as three stories of change. The development of these knowledge products resulted from engagements with investment owners and supply chain grantees. The foundation has already begun sharing the guidance note as part of the package provided to grantees when they submit investment proposals. This underscores the relevance and impact of the knowledge products developed by GL.



WaterAid



Water Aid continued engaging with GLS to advance their commitment to gender integration in the organisation and all programmes. We reviewed the country offices' five-year strategies and offered insights on how to enhance gender integration to move programmes along the gender integration spectrum.

GL conducted training with all staff from all areas and levels in three of the four country office offices (Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique). In all three groups, there was a high level of engagement and lively discussion. The majority of participants expressed their gratitude for the learning opportunity, both professionally and personally. The facilitators noted a strong demand for practical tools and further training, especially in the area of gender budgeting. The training also provided an opportunity for GL team members who don't usually work together to collaborate. The Madagascar training has already yielded significant success, fostering collaboration between WaterAid Madagascar and GL Mauritius. This success is a clear demonstration of the practical application of the training and its potential to revive operations in Madagascar.



The session has deepened my knowledge, which will make integrating the gender dimension into my work easier and clearer.

Mozambique delegate



What terrific research, thank you so much! This will be so helpful to CICan going forward.

Caroline Mars, Director, International Partnership, CICan

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) is a new client funded through Global Affairs Canada (GAC), which funds the Women Voice and Leadership (WVL) grant. Their interest in GLS comes through this funding channel. The South Africa Skills Training Enhancement Program (SASTEP) is a four-year program being implemented in partnership with the Department for Higher Education and Training (DHET) to work with all fifteen publicly funded Training, Vocational, Technical, Vocational, Education, and Training (TVET) Colleges in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape to strengthen the delivery and inclusiveness of TVET training and to expand the student support services that lead to student success and promote career readiness for all learners. The client has sought our consultancy services, underscoring our growing reputation as technical experts in gender integration.



Making change

Through our various modes of delivery, we span a variety of interlinked and intersectional themes. These include Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; Gender Based Violence (GBV), Economic Justice; Women's Political Participation as well as gender equality in and through the media.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

by Kevin Chiramba



Gender Links (GL) envisions a region in which women and girls exercise #VoiceAndChoice over their bodies, emphasising the full attainment of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) for all. This commitment permeates GL's work through the SADC Gender Protocol Alliance, local government, and grantees at regional, national, and local levels, with a focus on critical areas such as Adolescent SRHR, child marriages, and safe abortion. GL has actively published the **WOSSO fellowships** among young women in the **VCSAF** (Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund). These fellowships aim to equip advocates with skills and knowledge for effective advocacy in gender equality and women's empowerment. The following are some examples of impact:

Zimbabwe: One of the ACP grantees, The Unlimited Hope Alliance Trust in Zimbabwe, has played a significant role in amending the country's Marriage Act. Previously, the **Marriage Act** allowed underage marriages based on customary or religious practices, disregarding minimum age requirements. The recent revisions explicitly prohibit the marriage of girls under 18, aligning Zimbabwean laws with international standards.

South Africa: GL ensured that grantees working on **menstrual health** have actively promoted **menstrual hygiene management (MHM)** and worked to break the stigma surrounding menstruation. These grantees collaborate with local organisations, schools, and community centres to provide free or subsidised menstrual products. The **New Heritage Foundation** in South Africa successfully partnered with the Western Cape Department of Education, leading to the adoption of their menstrual health program in schools. The program covers essential topics such as menstrual anatomy,



Eswatini local government SRHR campaign and action planning workshop.
Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

hygiene practices, puberty education, and menstrual cycle awareness.

Lesotho: The **Mantsopa Institute** has received praise from members of parliament for its impactful work in several critical areas:

- **HIV/AIDS reduction:** The institute actively contributes to reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence.
- **Combating gender-based violence:** Mantsopa Institute plays a vital role in addressing GBV.
- **Enhancing access to reproductive health services:** The institute focuses on improving access to essential health services.

Project Jeune Leader in **Madagascar**, Mantsopa Institute in **Lesotho**, and the **Swaziland Network Campaign for Education for All (SWANCEFA)** in eSwatini are champions of comprehensive adolescent sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (ASRHR) sexual education. These three ASRHR CSE grantees have developed and implemented age-appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum materials for schools and communities. The curriculum covers essential topics such as anatomy, puberty, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), consent, gender identity, and healthy relationships.



Thank you to SWANCEFA the Girls' Club is in high demand as we have a huge number of dropouts due to pregnancy. We are hoping to reduce such by educating them on SRH and giving them confidence to access SRH services.

Delisile Simalane, Jericho High School Teacher in Eswatini Ntlangano Town, Shiselweni Region

During this period SWANCEFA made a significant contribution to the adoption of the *Eswatini National School Pregnancy Prevention and Management Policy*, which includes pregnancy alongside other health issues like HIV and STIs. The policy promotes comprehensive sexuality education, empowering learners with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions. The policy has had a significant impact on girls' retention in school as they are now allowed continue learning while pregnant. There has also been a reduction in stigma and discrimination against pregnant learners who now have access to support services, such as counselling and healthcare.

Ga Rankuwa YMCA helped create the South African National Youth **Policy** 2020-2030. This policy recognises that young people are diverse and need different kinds of support based on factors like age, gender, disability, location, education, sexual orientation, and risks they face. By addressing specific needs of different youth groups, like LGBTQI+ youth who face discrimination, the policy aims to ensure that all young people are included and supported to contribute positively to society.

ROOTS in Zimbabwe engaged in consultations on The New Marriage Act Chapter 5:15, advocating for its improvement through dialogue with community leaders to address issues surrounding child marriage and ensure its effective dissemination and enforcement within communities.

Sisonke National Sex Worker Movement played a key role in advocacy for a bill to decriminalise sex work.

New Heritage Foundation in South Africa collaborated with government departments on the sanitary dignity project, aiming to end period poverty by emphasizing comprehensive sexual reproductive health education for both girls and boys. While policy change is a complex process, advocating for sexual reproductive health



Women on the Cape Flats sewing sanitary pads sponsored by New Heritage Foundation.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

education can lead to impactful changes in policy, laws, and regulations to address period poverty effectively.

Advancing Safe Abortion

Evidence shows that nearly one-quarter of pregnancies in the region end in unsafe abortion, contributing to high maternal mortality. Only South Africa and Mozambique grant women the right to choose abortion during the first trimester.

During the November 2023 Voice and Choice summit, a group of VCSAF grantees initiated the **Safe Abortion Alliance Southern Africa (SAASA)** with partners from South Africa, Lesotho, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The purpose of SAASA is to advocate for access to safe abortion in SADC; share information; coordinate advocacy campaigns nationally and regionally; respond to emergency campaigns, and to educate each other on emerging developments. During the sixteen days of activism SAASA hosted a webinar on Unsafe Abortion and GBV. Prior to the webinar SAASA administered a [survey on Safe Abortion](#).

Women's Action Group (WAG), a SAASA member, is a leading organisation in Zimbabwe for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues. As a member of the SADC Safe Abortion Alliance (SAASA), WAG played a crucial role in advocating for the adoption of the Comprehensive Post Abortion Care guidelines in Zimbabwe. These guidelines provide much-needed clarity to service providers offering Post Abortion Care (PAC) and community mobilizers facilitating access to care. By promoting safe abortion practices, WAG respects women's rights to choice and contributes to preventing unsafe abortions.





Gender Based Violence

by Kevin Chiramba and Anushka Virahsawmy



In line with GL's vision, ending GBV features across all GL work, engaging men and ensuring safe spaces for women and girls and that they are economically empowered resilient and self-sufficient.



The "I Am a Man, I Can" campaign

Annually, the United Nations designates the period from November 25th, International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women, to December 10th, International Human Rights Day, as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence worldwide. For the 2023 campaign, the VCSAF GBV cluster organised a collaborative campaign on positive masculinities under the banner, "I am a MAN and I..." Partners included Unlimited Hope Alliance, Real Open Opportunities for Transformation Support Africa (ROOTS) and Matebeleland Aids Council in Zimbabwe; Lesotho YMCA, Incema, Kwanele, Life Savers Foundation, and Phola in South Africa. The campaign reached 400 participants face to face and 200,000 online. The grantees have formed a network to continue the campaign beyond the Sixteen Days and measure its impact.



In **South Africa**, GL and partners have participated in the crafting and implementation of the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide National Strategic Plan (GBVF-NSP). In February 2024 GL participated in the GBV Round Table discussion, organised by

the University of Cape Town on developing a GBV index for the country. The index aims to measure GBVF comprehensively, providing detailed insights that can inform policy-making, resource allocation, and advocacy efforts. Participants emphasised the importance of reliable data collection, addressing underreporting and ensuring inclusivity in the index.

At the WVL summit in March 2024, **Mikhulu Trust** won in the GBV category for its ground breaking work on challenging social norms at a young age. Their strategic use of WVL funds involved printing 9,000 wordless books distributed to community-based organisations and government service providers for family book-sharing initiatives.

Through the book-sharing scheme, Mikhulu Trust has fostered new social forms that modify relationships and behaviour patterns. Children learn about empathy, respect, and healthy relationships, laying the foundation for a violence-free future. Engaging families and communities has created dialogue, reflection, and transformation spaces. These interactions challenge harmful norms and promote positive attitudes towards gender equality and non-violence.

In **Mauritius** Gender Links Safe Haven Halfway Home (GLSHHH) is the only transitory Halfway Home for women and their children in the Republic of Mauritius, it fills a crucial gap in the continuum of care for individuals transitioning from crisis situations. GLSHHH aims at giving those women and girls, including their children, coming from traumatic backgrounds, a second chance to life while equipping them with the necessary tools to reintegrate society as empowered individuals.

GLSHHH provides services such as counselling and psychological support through; self-esteem, personal development and hygiene trainings; economic empowerment assistance, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights awareness sessions and After-school programs for children. The programs aim at the economical, emotional, sexual and mental emancipation of those women and children after their crisis period. Since the opening of SHHH in 2017 to mid-June 2024, we have accommodated 310 residents among which 156 were children (77 Females and 78 Males). In

2023, SHHH has been a refuge and a safe place for a total of 91 residents (45 adults, 29 Girl child and 17 Boy child) of which 28 were existing residents. Out of the 91 residents, 72 were Domestic Violence cases (28 adults, 44 children), 6 came from Children Shelters, 12 cases of Homelessness and 1 woman came from Women's Prison.



After school play time with adults at SHHH.

Credit: Kelly Figaro

GLSHHH serves as a beacon of hope and empowerment for young girls who, upon turning 18, must leave children's shelters and often find themselves with nowhere to go. This crucial support system provides these young women with a safe and nurturing environment where they can transition into adulthood. Through a range of services including vocational training, educational opportunities and counselling, GLSHHH helps them build the skills and confidence needed to achieve independence and stability.

By addressing both immediate needs and long-term goals, GLSHHH ensures that these young women are not only sheltered but are also empowered to build brighter futures. It is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive space for individuals experiencing transition or crisis, offering holistic support and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The young women can stay for up to a period of two years, during which their savings and applications to the national housing plan are closely monitored. This extended support period allows them to build a solid financial foundation and secure stable housing, facilitating a smooth transition to independent living.

The shelter's economic empowerment programme plays a crucial role in helping survivors of gender-based violence rebuild their lives. By providing self-esteem training, financial literacy workshops, and job placement assistance, the program ensures

that all survivors earn at least the national basic salary. This financial independence is crucial for their recovery, enabling them to support themselves and their children and reducing the risk of returning to abusive situations. Safe Haven's approach not only addresses immediate economic needs but also fosters long-term resilience and self-sufficiency among survivors.

Recognising the importance of breaking the cycle of poverty and violence, Safe Haven offers extracurricular activities tailored for the 44 children of survivors. Safe Haven provides a stable and nurturing environment for the children of the survivors by ensuring their basic needs and stability. Tailor-made programs help promote their physical, psychological, and emotional growth. Through the home-like atmosphere and a personalised care plan, Safe Haven caters to the unique needs and goals of each child.

Additionally, a medical doctor and therapist follow up with the mental health of the residents, providing essential healthcare and therapeutic support to address the trauma emotional challenges they may face. They also make referral to other services such as hospitals, school psychologists for proper diagnosis and follow-up in the schools. This comprehensive approach ensures that residents receive the necessary medical and psychological care to support their overall well-being and successful reintegration into society.



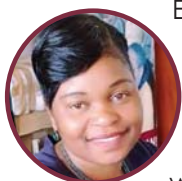
Activity time for the children and their mother .

Credit: Annabelle Pierre



Economic and Climate Justice

by Priscilla Maposa



Economic and Climate Justice (ECJ) is one of Gender Links' key strategic pillars. The programme has made strides in addressing economic inequalities that exist between women and men while at the same time reducing the prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) among women. The programme addresses the economic roots of gender-based violence through promoting economic empowerment.

Research shows that poverty and economic dependence contribute to the perpetuation of GBV. Women often stay in abusive relationships due to economic dependence on their partners, lack of access to education and job opportunities, and limited financial resources. Currently, the ECJ is being implemented as the Sunrise Campaign in South Africa and the Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development programme in Zimbabwe.

The Sunrise Campaign, anchored through the Centres of Excellence (COE) local authorities, dates back to 2013 when Gender Links piloted a programme entitled **Empower Women: End Violence** which sought to ascertain that increasing women's agency and economic opportunities will result in less violence. The programme supports survivors of GBV with various skills and knowledge including life skills and entrepreneurship training, mentorship, and access to finance.

Local authorities integrate GBV and Local Economic Development (LED) programming through the development and implementation of GBV and LED Action plans as part of the programme. Over 2000 women from 10 countries have been part of the Sunrise Campaign. More recently Eswatini, Madagascar and South Africa have rolled out the programme between 2019 and 2022 supported by the UNTF reaching out to 760 women. An evaluation of the programme in those countries revealed that the prevalence of GBV among women fell from 27% at baseline to 22% at the end of the programme.

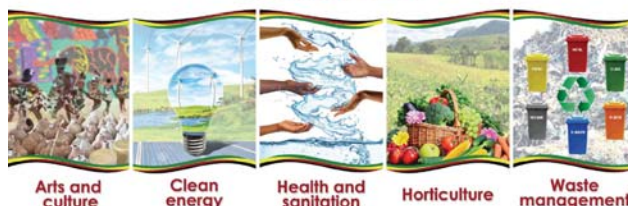
As of 2023, the Sunrise Campaign is being implemented in 10 local authorities from South Africa's 4 provinces, including Gauteng, Northern

Cape, Limpopo and Western Cape with support from the Irene M. Staehelin (IMS) Foundation. The programme is an upscaling of the Sunrise Campaign in South Africa targeting 200 women. Uniquely, the programme is targeting marginalized areas where inhabitants of the Khoi and San originate and their inclusion in this programme is evidence of inclusive development.

Zimbabwe is implementing the Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development in 12 local authorities in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works (MLGPW) with support from the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe.



Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development in Zimbabwe



The programme seeks to reduce poverty and enhance livelihoods through gender-responsive and inclusive local economic development. The programme covers five key thematic areas including **Arts and Culture, Clean Energy, Health and Sanitation, Horticulture, and Waste Management**. The programme draws lessons from the Sunrise Campaign mentioned earlier in this report. The Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development programme has distinctively built infrastructure in 12 local authorities implementing the programme including greenhouses, biogas digesters, fish ponds, market stalls and waste management facilities. The programme responds to Zimbabwe's national objectives particularly Vision 2030 on attaining an upper-middle-income economy. It is important to note that the programme also addresses environmental governance issues through the use of renewable energy and waste disposal. To date, the programme has reached out to 512 participants most of whom

are women and youths. This is set to reach 1800 by the end of the programme, whilst also creating 3600 jobs.



Green economy: Women in Murehwa, Zimbabwe, are turning waste into useful products.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

The results achieved of programme implementation in South Africa and Zimbabwe include the following:

- **Increased ownership of the programme by local authorities:** Local authorities have taken ownership of the programme and this is evidenced by their contribution of human and financial resources. Local authorities have also institutionalized the ECJ programme through the development of LED flagship plans. These efforts are key for the sustainability of the programme.
- **Collection of Baseline Monitoring and evaluation:** Baseline monitoring and evaluation data indicated that the gender attitudes score of participants currently stands at **70%** while their average monthly income is **ZAR1422**. These are expected to change positively as the programme continues up to 2025.
- **Strengthened partnerships:** The programme has strengthened partnerships in the 2 countries and these range from government departments including key ministries, local authorities, and other key stakeholders in Zimbabwe and South Africa.





Women's Political Participation (WPP)

by Mabetha Mantebheleng

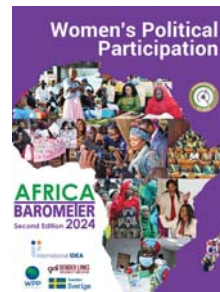


Gender Links is part of the International Idea-led consortium of six organisations (Gender Links, FAWE, FEMNET, IFAN-Gender Laboratory, PADARE and WLSA). The partners are implementing the project:

Enhancing the inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa. The consortium focusses on eight African countries namely Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The project is funded by the Embassy of Sweden in Ethiopia, with the overall goal to increasing the political representation and participation of women in the SADC region and Africa in line with the Maputo Protocol of 2023, the revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development of 2015, various sub-regional protocols and standards and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through this project Gender Links focused on increasing the number of women who participate in politics. These was done through several activities that took place in Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and other SADC countries. The main activity was to update the Women's Political Participation (WPP) Africa Barometer. The Barometer is for benchmarking of the progress against the normative frameworks such the Sustainable Development Goals, Maputo protocol, Agenda 2063 and the SADC Gender Protocol.

The 2024 WPP Africa Barometer showed just a small increase for women's representation in Africa parliaments by just one percentage point for 25% to 26% in a space of two years. This indicates that Africa is far from reaching the fifty-fifty target of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the pace which it is moving. With over 30 countries having had elections in the last two years, the women representation should have been much higher. Women representation in top executive positions has increased from 7% to 13%. There has been a decline in women's representation in political party leadership from 12% to 9%. At 25%, local authorities have the lowest representation of women.



The 2024 WPP Barometer introduced a new chapter on the role of men in promoting WPP. Patriarchy continues to be the single biggest barrier to WPP and this chapter provides a different angle by providing examples of the shift in power in the public and private spaces. The chapter is showing that where there is a will, the fifty-fifty principle is a win-win formula. A man who understands giving a woman space to participate from the level of the household is most likely to consider women in the public spaces. The case studies collected have indicated that this is indeed possible.

Overcoming my fear of the unknown

2023 marks my second term as a Councillor, but to be here I had to fight my own battle - 'a fear of the unknown.'

When I became Chairperson, I had to stop teaching as I could not manage the pressure of both commitments. This impacted me financially as I relied on my husband's financial resources. People attempted to call me Chairwoman, yet Chairman on its own is a title in Council. Despite politics being male dominated, women have also been a great obstacle to the growth of other fellow women.

Gender Links has provided a platform and neutral space for discussions despite political partisanship on gender related issues. It has united women from different political parties, bringing us together to rally for one cause. In my community, the women's movement is very much alive as a result of the training I received through Gender Links.



Puwai Chipunza - Zvimba Rural District Council Vice Chairperson

Efforts made by GL to increase the representation of women in political position include working with the Women in Local Government Forum of Zimbabwe who lobbied the President of **Zimbabwe** for a local government quota. This resulted into law which introduced 30% local government quota which was enshrined into the Constitution of Zimbabwe. As a result of this quota, there was an increase in women's representation from 14% to 33%. This clearly shows that where there is will to include women's participation in politics there is always a way. The quota has proved to work in favour of women for countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique by rapidly increasing the WPP in lower houses and local government.



Youth politician Catherine Kambazambi during Mock Rally in Maun, Botswana Women Political Participation Cross Generation Academy Training. Photo: Gender Links

In **Botswana**, Gender Links working in partnership with five major political parties of Botswana and seven Women's Rights Organisations prepared a paper for the Constitutional Review. The paper drew its inspiration from the work that Gender Links has done in Botswana on the WPP academies which brought together serving and aspiring politicians for capacity building and cross generational dialogues on women's equal and effective participation in decision-Making. The Constitutional Review was considered as the strategic entry point for effecting change. However, these recommendations were not included during the final stages of the Constitutional Review when the bill was brought before the parliament.

Gender Links developed a survey to provide a better understanding into different perspectives

on WPP. The purpose of collecting attitudes surveys on women's political participation was to gather information and insights about public opinions, attitudes, and perceptions regarding women's involvement in politics. The survey was administered in all the 15 Countries of SADC. The results of the survey presented a different view from the actual representation of women in politics as both men and women scored very high in most of the questions of the survey. This shows that there is generally a positive attitude towards WPP, however, there are some barriers that prevent women from being elected in political position. According to the WPP Africa Barometer there are long-term structural barriers which result in exclusion of women from political decision-making as well as immediate barriers. These include social, cultural and religious, influences that have resulted in women being rendered as second-class citizens.

Challenges

Some African countries are not making an effort to increase the number of women in politics. Women are facing many structural barriers which need governments to be intentional about including them in politics through some temporary special measures. Other countries that have introduced the temporary special measures are facing regression. This indicates that efforts that have been made are falling to provide consistency in the retention of women in politics. There is need for countries to develop the strategies that will be sustainable.

The project is in its final year and without further funding the work on WPP may not continue. Research through the Barometer has shown that Africa still has a long way to go for reaching the target of fifty-fifty in political decision-making. It is therefore important that the work on WPP to continue so that efforts such as those made in Zimbabwe could be duplicated in other African countries.

Next steps

- Holding political party dialogues ahead of the elections to encourage them to include women as candidates and in their manifestos.
- Continue to conduct gender audit of elections for countries that will have their elections in 2024.
- Continue working with the media to monitor women political participation and profiling of women politicians.



Gender, Media and ICTs

by Priscilla Maposa



GL views media, including social media, as both a tool for amplifying voice and a target for change. In 2023, Gender Links (GL) focused its efforts on mainstreaming media within its programmes. GL also aimed to acknowledge and affirm the work done by civil society organizations, promote discussions on achieving gender equality and justice, and strengthen partnerships between women's rights and mainstream organisations in the SADC region. Additionally, GL aimed to create cross-sectoral partnerships to foster knowledge generation and sharing among different organisations.

Media training in Women's Political Participation

Gender Links continued to use media to for advocacy for the WPP work and to raise awareness, promote gender equality and advancement of representation and participation of women in political sphere. In order to have a meaningful participation of different media houses, there was a virtual training of journalist which focused on amongst other things, improving language, stereotypes, and double standards when reporting on women politicians. The training resulted in many stories which created dialogue and discussions on women's political participation. These journalists will continue working with women politicians through profiling and writing stories that will challenge the perceptions towards women politicians.

The virtual media training organised by GL in 2023 not only provided journalists with valuable insights into Women Political Participation but also fostered collaboration and knowledge-sharing among media professionals from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho and Namibia. While emphasising on empowering journalists to cover WPP issues effectively, the training contributed to raising awareness and promoting dialogue around the importance of women's involvement in politics. Overall, the training session served as a platform for journalists to enhance their reporting skills and contribute to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the region.

Media training on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

GL facilitated media training in Zimbabwe during the period under review, focusing on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Promoting Gender Inclusive Local Economic Development (LED). The training was specifically designed for media representatives and local authorities involved in these programmes. The initiative's main goal was to provide media outlets with a deeper understanding of GRB and to establish stronger connections with local authorities to enhance the visibility of their gender-inclusive Local Economic Development (LED) efforts.

The training session was successful in enhancing the capacity of journalists to effectively communicate about GRB and gender-inclusive LED. Participants gained valuable insights into the importance of presenting these topics clearly and positively. They also learned about the significant role that the media plays in shaping the narrative around GRB and gender-inclusive LED, as well as the impact of media coverage on public perceptions and attitudes. Through educating journalists about gender-inclusive LED and GRB, GL aimed to inspire them to publish more stories on these topics and contribute to changing societal perspectives.

Following the training, journalists produced a total of 11 stories, including coverage across various media platforms such as radio, television, print and online. This diverse range of stories helped to



Group work Media Monitoring Training Workshop at Gaborone Protea Hotel.
Photo: Mboy Maswabi

raise awareness about GRB and gender-inclusive LED among the public. Additionally, the efforts of GL aimed to ensure that the valuable work being done by Local Authorities in these areas was effectively publicised and recognised. Overall, the media training session proved to be a successful endeavour in empowering journalists to advocate for gender equality and inclusive economic development through their reporting.



Journalists covering the Gender Responsive Budgeting meeting with Mayors and Council Chairpersons in Harare.
Photo: Lverage Nhamoyebonde

Media in the work of WVL

In **South Africa**, WVL grantees implemented innovative ICT solutions to empower women and girls and protect their rights. Through these interventions, they have successfully established a reliable network of individuals who are ready to provide assistance whenever it is needed.

The WVLSA has empowered women's rights organisations and movements to enhance their presence on various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. These organisations have recognised the significance of social media in their communication strategies, leading to a greater understanding of live streaming, audience testing, post boosting for targeted growth, running focused campaigns, and establishing a donor network.



Bellona Executive Director Tinyiko Ngwenya speaking at the March 2023 WVL summit.
Photo Colleen Lowe Morna

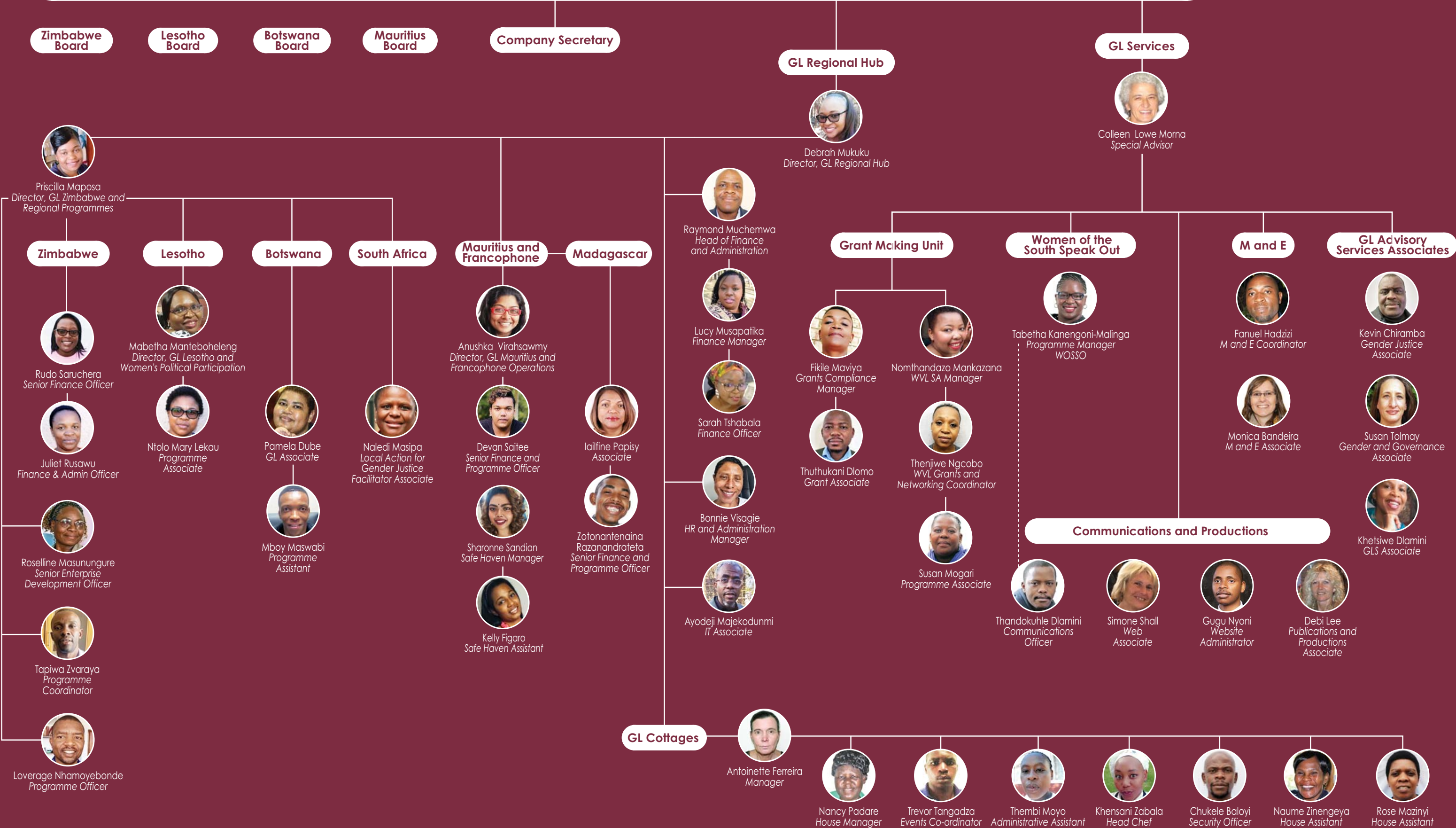
The WVLSA project developed and launched the **Bellona Mobile Application**, a platform that seeks to empower women and enable them to elevate their careers to become decision-makers in their respective organisations. The application is aimed at supporting women throughout their different life stages in their pursuit to become financially independent. GL recognise that women are also mothers, sisters, daughters, friends and colleagues and hence use a holistic approach to understanding and advancing the rights of women in society. The intervention aims to change the stigma of feminism and illustrate that the premise of feminism is "equal opportunity."

Next steps

In 2024 GL will continue utilising Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool to empower women. Social media analytics will be utilised to effectively measure the impact of the media and ICT initiatives and track progress. GL aims to bridge the digital gender divide and provide women with access to information, resources and opportunities by leveraging on the media and ICT. This strategic use of ICT seeks to empower women by enabling them to participate in the digital sphere, connect with networks and amplify their voices. Through the effective use of ICT, a more inclusive and equitable society where women have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to social, economic and political development will be attained.

GENDER LINKS BOARD

AUDIT COMMITTEE Internal Audit





Measuring change

by Fanuel Hadzizi



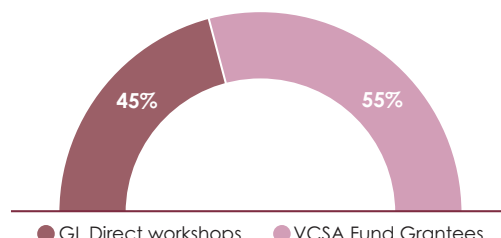
At Gender Links, we diligently monitor and track our progress against established targets, indicators, and objectives. This systematic approach helps us identify patterns and changes within our ongoing projects and programs. By enhancing accountability and transparency, we build trust with our stakeholders, donors and participants. In this report, we present data covering the period from January 2023 to March 2024, totaling 15 months. It is important to note that direct comparisons with previous annual reports, which covered 12-month periods, should account for this difference in the length of the reporting periods.

Our reports from 2023 to March 2024 show a significant positive increase in our reach compared to the previous year. We successfully completed 737 events, marking an increase of 94 events from the prior reporting period. We saw a substantial increase in the number of events held, grew by 16 percentage points. We directly engaged 32,012 participants through face-to-face interactions, including meetings, dialogues, workshops, and marches. Notably, the Voice and Choice Southern Africa program accounted for 25,021 participants, underscoring its critical role in our outreach efforts.

Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSA Fund) grantees accounted for 45% of GL events and 55% through other programmes. By consistently highlighting our progress and identifying gaps as they arose, we have significantly improved program performance. This proactive approach allows our team to implement timely interventions whenever grantees miss predetermined milestones

for example when Master of Healing Foundation was failing to implement their planned activities.

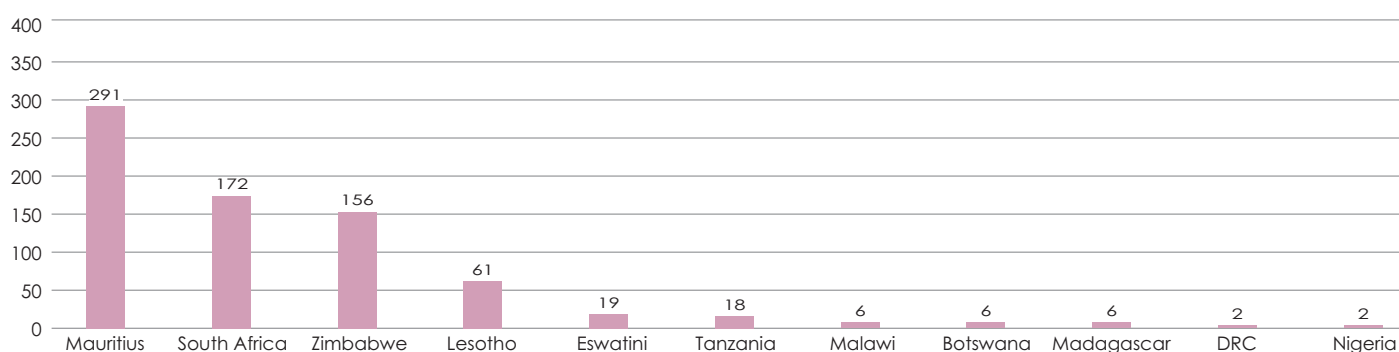
Type of events



Through these efforts, we not only expand our reach but also strengthen the impact of our initiatives, ensuring that we continue to drive meaningful change across Southern Africa. Our commitment to continuous improvement and transparency remains at the forefront of our mission, empowering us to better serve our communities and achieve our organisational goals.

Row labels	Grand Total	% Events 2023 to March 2024
Mauritius	291	39%
South Africa	172	23%
Zimbabwe	156	21%
Lesotho	61	8%
Eswatini	19	3%
Tanzania	18	2%
Botswana		1%
Malawi	6	1%
Madagascar		1%
Nigeria	2	0%
DRC	2	0%
Grand Total	737	

Events per country 2023/2024



With regard to events per country, Mauritius had the highest number of events, recording 291 (39%) of our total events. Gender Links operates a shelter in Mauritius and has work in Rodrigues Islands, where we host various entrepreneurship activities throughout the year.

The rollout of the Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSA Fund) across the region significantly contributed to our success, accounting for 45% of our annual events. Grantees such as Unlimited Hope Alliance Trust, Incema, Mantsopa Institute, and Ga Rankuwa YMCA each contributed over 20 events, collectively organizing 134 events during the period 2023 to March 2024. Overall, our grantees accomplished 329 events, while Gender Links directly participated in 408 events. Grantees accounted for 45% of the events, whereas Gender Links workshops comprised 55% of the total events.

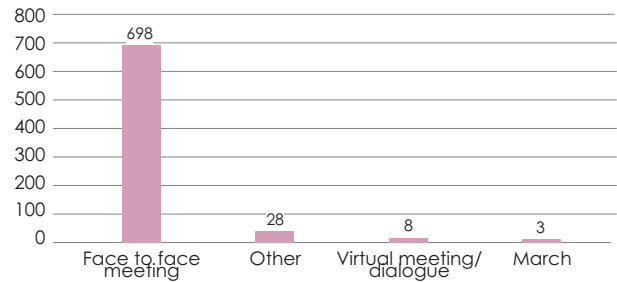
Our sub granting focus has had a net effect of increased reach and impart as collaboration with grantees ensures that we amplify our voice across the region.

Type of Events

The bar graph below illustrates that over the past 15 months, 95% (698) of our events were face-to-

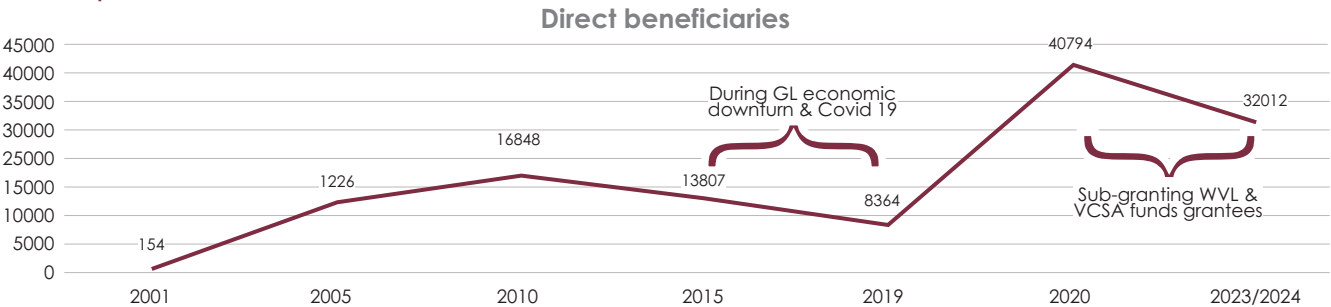
face meetings, dialogues, or workshops. This high percentage underscores our commitment to direct community engagement. Meanwhile, 4% (28) of the events consisted of other activities, including pad distributions, data collection, sports events, and roadshows. Only 1% of our events took place in the form of virtual meetings or dialogues.

Number of events 2023 to March 2024



These event types reflect the current post-Covid context, where in-person interactions have become the norm again. VCSA grantees work actively within their communities. This approach ensures that their efforts are impactful and resonate strongly with the people they serve. By maintaining a predominantly face-to-face event structure, we effectively address the needs and preferences of our participants, fostering stronger connections and more meaningful engagements.

Participants

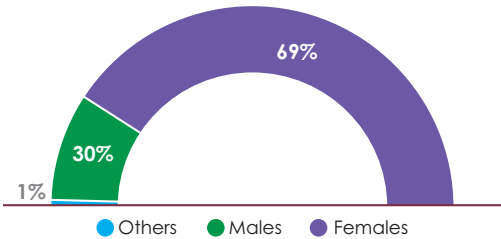


GL reached 32012 participants during the period 2023 to March 2024. This is a 7.6 per cent increase in participants reached in 2022. Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSA Fund) recorded the highest number of direct participants in this reporting period (Grantees made a significant effort to capture their activities online).



Women comprised 69% of the participants during the period 2023 to March 2024, men at 30% and gender non-conforming persons at 1%. The Entrepreneurship (Sunrise Campaign) had the second highest number of participants reached as South Africa and Mauritius implemented their activities. The Local Action for Gender Justice programme contributed the third highest number of participants as Zimbabwe implemented their local economic justice project nationwide.

Participants by sex



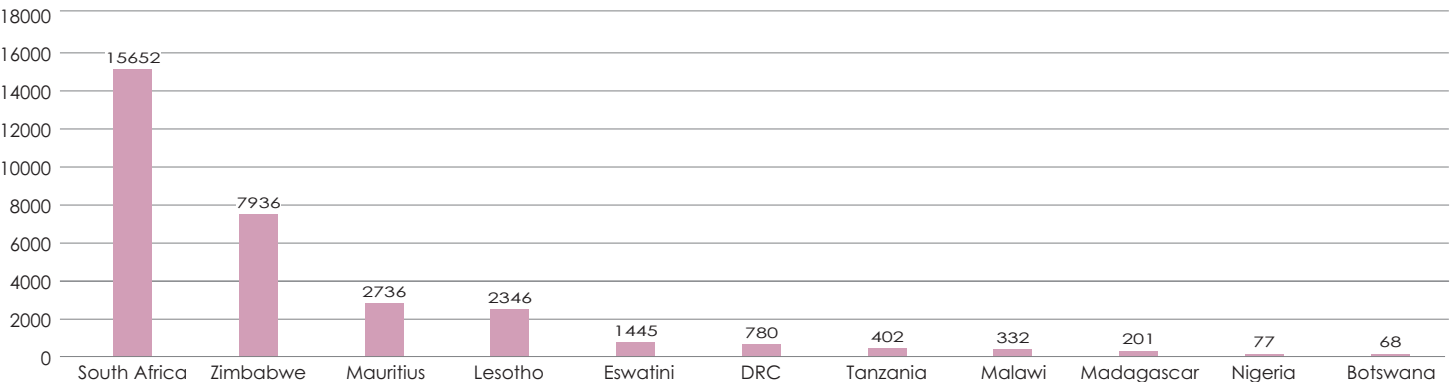
Participants by programme

	Male	Female	Gender non-conforming	Events
Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund(VCSA Fund)	7825	16819	377	329
Entrepreneurship (Sunrise Campaign)	557	2506	0	314
Local Action for Gender Justice	1018	1713	0	71
GL Services	69	115	0	6
WOSSO - Women of the South Speak Out	16	526	5	6
WVL-SA	26	256	2	5
Policy and Movement Building (Alliance)	1	20	0	3
Communications for Social Change	43	111	7	3
Grand Total	9555	22066	391	737

The table above shows that Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund (VCSA Fund) reached the highest number of participants and events-25021. This is because the programme consists of 38 strong grantee organisations pushing hard to meet their targets, as they had two quarterly reports during this period. The entrepreneurship project had the

second highest number of participants because of the IMS donor funds that supported implementation in SA and the CW in Mauritius. Local Action for Gender Justice reached the third highest number of participants as Local Economic Development work is in full swing in Zimbabwe.

Total participants per country

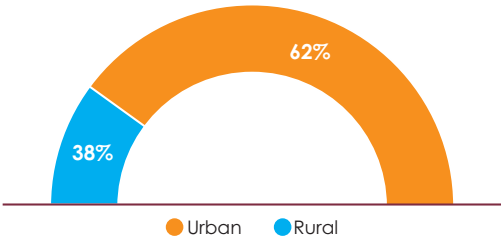


The figure above shows that during the reporting period (Jan 2023 to March 2024), participants reached were in 11 countries across Southern Africa and Nigeria (through the work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). We reached the most participants (49%) in South Africa because of the VCSA Fund project and the Sunrise Campaign IMS project. Zimbabwe reached 7973

(25%) of total participants, while Mauritius reached 2736 (9%). Participants in Lesotho, Eswatini and DRC reached 14% of GL participants. The rest of the countries reached only 1% of total participants respectively. South Africa is supported by 16 grantee organisations and the GL HQ hence it's no surprise that it leads all other countries in reach.

In terms of where they live, 62% of those reached resided in rural areas, while 38% were from urban locations. This distribution highlights our focus on extending our reach to rural communities, where support and resources are often most needed.

Residency

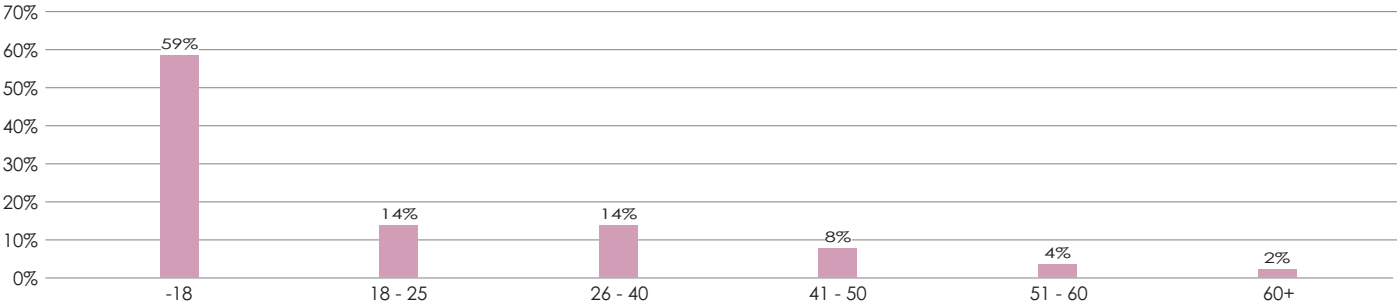


Participants breakdown by age

The bar graph shows that during the period 2023 to March 2024, the most significant proportion (59%) of the participants reached is in the under-18 age group, reflecting the increasing work done in schools, especially with VCSA fund grantees.

The 18-25 and 26-40 age groups constituted 14% of the participants, respectively. 8% in the age group of 41-50 and 4% in the age group 51-60. Just 2% of the participants reached were in the age group of 60 and above.

% reached by age group during the period 2023 to March 2024





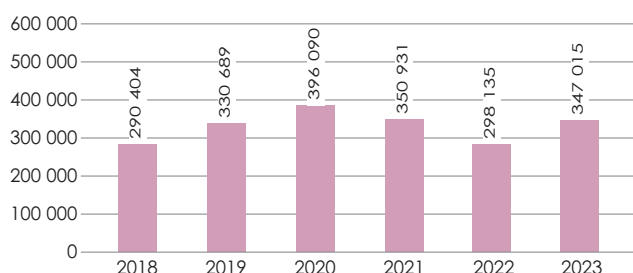
Communicating results

by Thandokuhle Dlamini and Tabetha Kanengoni-Malinga

GL amplifies its voice and work through mainstream and social media platforms as well as newsletters through electronic mail. As we advocate for mainstreaming gender equality in different spaces, GL also mainstreams media in all its work. Online and mainstream media is a foundational pillar of GL's communication and public engagement efforts. GL creates and shares content about its work and developments within the promotion of gender equality and women's rights space. GL's sharing of information maintains and increases its online and mainstream media footprint. GL's online footprint continues to grow as detailed below.

GL Website analytics

GL website page views



GL received almost 350 000 website page views in the period of January 2023 to March 2024. This is an increase of about 50 000 views compared to the previous year. GL is experiencing a gradual increase from page views received in the past year. This increase is attributed to the news page as the most popular visited page on the website.

This is because all news stories and articles shared on the news page are directed under **What's New** page, which is also popular among visitors. The website links are then shared across all GL media platforms including press releases, email distribution lists and social media platforms. These sharing platforms in turn redirects viewers to the GL website thus an increase in our website visitations. The comment box on the GL site also encourages more engagement on a particular article. The comment section is one to have a dedicated communications officer to monitor and approve comments immediately as appreciation to visitors' feedback and continued engagement on the post in the coming year.

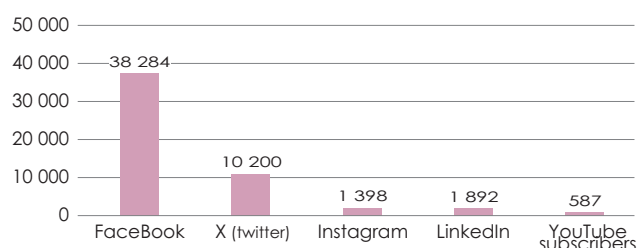
The GL website however remains its largest online footprint. In light of the shrinking programme areas, an investment into more innovative and a user friendly website theme is being proposed for the upcoming year. This will commence by a digital strategy for website development and social media.

This may attract even more website visits and also maintain returning users. Furthermore, consistency in new high quality content that covers the whole region, particularly for the most visited pages, will also attract new as well as increased website views in future.

GL Social media platforms analytics

GL maintained an active social media presence across all its platforms, with a wider reach on Facebook followed by X.com and then LinkedIn. Though LinkedIn posts were only shared on the WOSSO page, much of GL communication and content was shared as well. An additional reach and followers will be sought by reviving the GL regional LinkedIn page and share as and when sharing on all other media platforms.

GL social media followers



GL enjoys a following of 52,352 across all platforms.

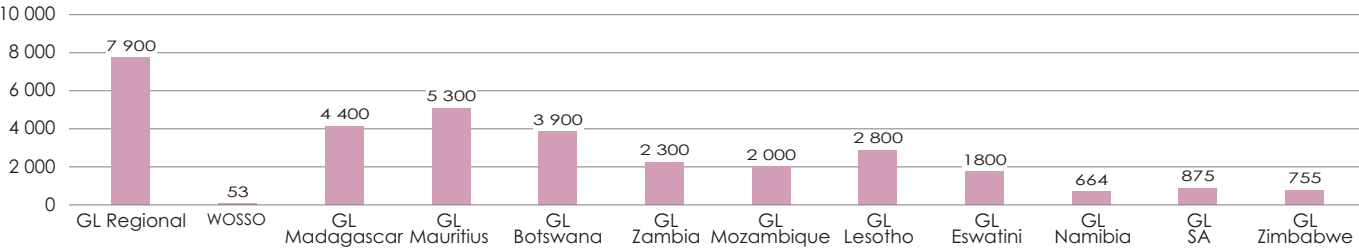
GL's **@Genderlinks X** following grew from within the year. GL gained 794 more following, compared to 8968 to 10200 in the previous year.

The larger than normal following gain is attributed to the Women of the south speak out (WOSSO) and Women's Voice and Leadership pages that have been active since the past year that tags and shares GL posts faithfully and vice versa. GL is followed by influential people and organisations with a larger X audience.

GLs **Instagram** account has not been active in the past year though communication strategies are in place to make ultimate use of the platform to disseminate GL content. Likewise, a GL LinkedIn account is to be activated and equally actively posted on as Facebook and X.com.

GL continues to use its **YouTube** space to share video content and livestream webinar sessions. GL maintained an active **Facebook** presence regionally and in its ten offices with an additional Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO) programme page. GL Facebook pages combined have amassed close to 33000 likes and 36000 followers over time.

GL Facebook likes



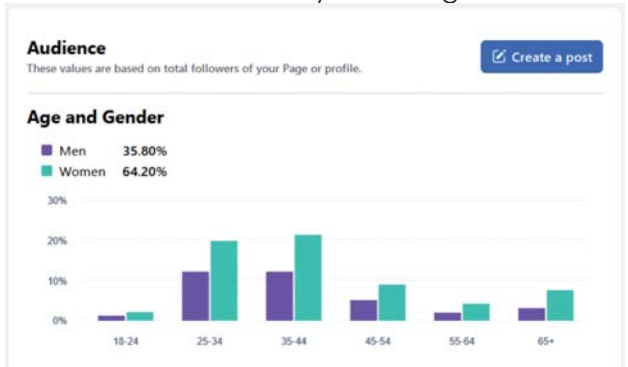
Of these, the most followed page is the GL Main or regional page with 9 323 followers and 7 900 likes. From the country pages, Mauritius and Madagascar remain the most followed and liked pages while Botswana had the most increased followers and likes during the year 2023 period.

Posts for Botswana include content from the peer learning, mentorship, including citizens attitudes and perceptions on Women's leadership and political participation funded by International Idea as part of the Enhancing Women's Political Participation project.

Drawing followers to the regional Facebook will require localisation of content including tagging the regional page and allowing multilingual settings on all GL pages to enhance synergy of content.

Analytical data based on total GL Facebook followers show women as 64% followers compared to men at 36%.

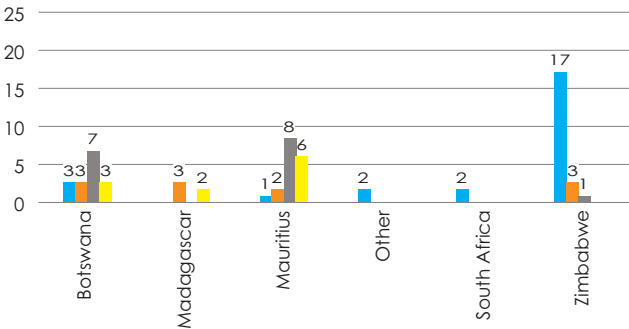
A larger following comes from Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa during this period. An age breakdown also shows that on Facebook, GL is most popular with audiences between the ages of 25-34 as well as 35-44 years of age.



To provide proper insight of the social media GL footprint clearly requires a new strategy to merge the GL pages for systematic posting, campaigning and analysis.

GL in the news

GL in the news 2023



GL also tracks its online presence on the mainstream media. In the past year GL enjoyed a total 65 mentions in the news across online, TV, radio and print media. These include mainstream media interviews with GL staff and associates and mention of GL work in the region.

GL press releases

GL disseminates information and content through newsletters and press releases. A total of **35 press releases** were sent out during the period of January 2023 to March 2024. On average, GL enjoys reach of 5000 people per press release.



Learning and sharing

by Nomthandazo Mankazana



Gender Links hosted two Learning and Sharing Summits during the year under review. The Women's Voice and Leadership [Learning and Sharing Summit](#) funded by Global Affairs Canada held 7-8 March 2023 as well as the [#Voice and Choice Summit](#) from 1-2 November 2023 both held in Johannesburg. Grantees also had an opportunity to attend the [Women Deliver Conference](#) in Kigali, Rwanda.

Both the summits aimed at promoting knowledge sharing amongst Gender Based Violence and SRHR advocates; gathering case studies on action, leadership and institutional practice and capacity building; acknowledging and affirm the work done by civil society organizations. Promoting discussion and reflection on what works to achieve gender equality and justice; strengthening partnerships between women's rights and mainstream organisations working in the SADC region and, creating cross-sectoral partnerships.

The key statistics include:

Event	Date	Participants			Number of winners	Number of runner-ups
		Total	Females	Males		
WVL-SA Summit	7-8 March 2023	66	77% (51)	23% (15)	10	11
Voice and Choice summit	1-2 November 2023	58	74% (43)	26% (15)	10	12

The total number of entries per category were as follows:

Category	WVL-SA Summit	Voice and Choice summit
Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health	2	15
Gender Based Violence	17	5
Safe Abortion	0	5
Menstrual Health	0	5
Media	3	0
Leadership	9	4
Organisational development	16	2
Early pregnancies & child marriages	0	3
Sex work	0	3
Joint campaigns	0	3
Youth Empowerment	5	0
Economic Empowerment	5	0
Total number of entries	57	45



Women's Voice and Leadership Summit

The [Women's Voice and Leadership Summit](#) attracted [21 awards](#) (10 winners and 11 runner-ups) in leadership: organisational growth and development, Gender Based Violence, Economic Empowerment, Social Media, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Youth Empowerment. Western Cape with seven winners scooped the most number of awards followed by six from Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal respectively and two from Limpopo.

The youngest participant at the WVL summit, 18-year-old student Jade Swartz said "This day means everything". Swartz, from New Heritage Foundation, won the runner up in the Youth Empowerment category. Her organisation also won the award for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights described by the judges as a project that is outstanding in its "innovation and impact, working in schools on menstrual health, with girls and boys, and now moving to the national level with the Dignity Campaign.

The awards coincided with the Commission of the Status on Women 67 (CSW 67) annual meeting at UN headquarters in New York under the banner: Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Voice and Choice Summit

Gender Links hosted a Voice and Choice [Learning and Sharing Summit](#) from 1 - 2 November 2023, aimed at promoting knowledge sharing amongst SRHR advocates; gathering case studies on action, leadership and institutional practice and capacity building; acknowledging and affirm the work done by civil society organizations; promoting discussion and reflection on what works to achieve gender equality and justice; strengthening partnerships between women's rights and mainstream organisations working in the SADC region and, creating cross sectoral partnerships. The [Summit](#) attracted 48 entries for the following ten categories: Organisational development, Leadership, Sex work, Gender Based Violence, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, Early pregnancies and child marriages, LGBTQI+ Menstrual Health, and Safe abortion. Grantees from 36 organisations across six SADC countries walked away with [22 awards](#).

The formation and launch of the Safe Abortion Alliance of Southern Africa (SAASA) during the summit is a key achievement that also highlights the power of networking. Grantees working on Safe Abortion across different countries came together to form this alliance. SAASA aims to ensure access to safe, legal, and affordable abortion services. Its purposes include:



- **Advocacy and Policy Change:** Working to influence laws, policies and practices to support reproductive rights and access to safe abortion.
- **Education and Awareness:** Providing information and education to the public about reproductive health, rights, and the importance of safe abortion services.
- **Access to Services:** Facilitating access to safe and legal abortion services, often through partnerships with healthcare providers.
- **Support and Counselling:** Offering support, counselling, and aftercare for individuals seeking abortions.
- **Research and Data Collection:** Conducting research to improve understanding of abortion-related issues and to inform policy and practice.
- **Reducing Stigma:** Working to reduce the stigma associated with abortion through public education and advocacy.

Overall, the Alliance aims to strengthen its work in the SADC region to protect and promote reproductive health and rights, ensuring that individuals have the information, support, and services they need to make informed decisions about their reproductive lives.

The main **outcomes** of the Summits are:

- **Knowledge Exchange:** The sharing of best practices, innovative ideas, and successful strategies are facilitated among participants.
- **Networking:** Opportunities are provided for participants to connect with peers, experts, and leaders in their field to build professional relationships and collaborations.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships:** The formation of partnerships and collaborations will be encouraged to tackle common challenges and achieve shared goals.
- **Showcasing Innovations:** New technologies, methodologies, and approaches that can be adopted or adapted by participants will be highlighted.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Feedback is gathered from participants to improve future initiatives, programs, and strategies.
- **Inspiration and Motivation:** Participants are inspired through keynote speeches, success stories, and motivational sessions to drive positive change in their respective fields.

Looking ahead:

- GL will host the final Voice and Choice summit for Amplify change grantees in March 2025 together with the Women's Voice and Leadership Global Affairs sponsored grantees in an attempt to bring together more networking opportunities between South African based civil society organisations and SADC organisations.
- GL will ensure that ACP and WVL-SA grantees have access to WhatsApp groups to continue to explore networking opportunities.



Sustaining change

GL's sustainability model is multifaceted. It includes investing in people, ideas, innovation, fund raising, sound financial management, the environment and savings for the future. The following sections cover some important highlights in 2023-2024.

People power

by Vivian Bakainaga



During this period GL had an increase in staff component, the HR made significant strides in enhancing employee engagement. Our employees are at the heart of our success. GL continued to roll out a

flexible work policy better to support our team's work-life balance and productivity.

GL embarked on a salary market survey. The salary adjustment reflects GL's commitment to ensuring our compensation remains competitive and aligns with similar organisations.

GL Human Resource - Breakdown 2023

Unit	Full-time	Associates	Interns	Total	Female	Male
Head Office - South Africa	4	1		5	4	1
GL Services	5	3		8	6	2
GL Cottages	10			10	3	7
Botswana	1	1		2		2
Eswatini		1		1		1
Lesotho		2		2	2	
Madagascar		1		1		1
Mauritius	4	2	1	7	6	1
Zimbabwe	5	1		6	4	2
Total	29	12	1	42	25	17

The table shows that in the period under review GL had 42 staff and associates; 25 women and 17 men.

GL's overall average years of service is 7.3 years. This demonstrates that GL has a high retention rate of employees. In November 2023, GL contracted an organisational development specialist to look at the GL Human Resource Component. The OD Specialist held one-on-one discussions with all employees of GL, in November 2023. Staff attributed to their staying long at GL is because of two main aspects:

- **Employee Engagement:** High levels of engagement and commitment from employees, who feel connected to the GL's mission, values, and goals.

- **Job Satisfaction:** Employees were satisfied with their roles, responsibilities, and the sense of duty to the work GL does for the bigger well-being of women empowerment and advocacy in the region. Over the past year, GL identified several challenges, including decreased donor funding and the need for greater flexibility in our workforce. To address these issues and ensure financial sustainability, we have introduced a range of contractual strategies tailored to meet both GL needs and employee preferences.

To ensure a seamless transition, GL conducted a thorough review of our workforce requirements and senior management to identify roles best suited for each contractual strategy. GL new contractual strategies include:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offering part-time, remote, and freelance contracts to attract a diverse talent pool and reduce overhead costs.
- **Project-Based Contracts:** Engaging employees on a project basis to ensure resources are allocated efficiently and aligned with specific business needs.
- **Fixed-Term Contracts:** Utilising fixed-term contracts for roles requiring specific expertise for a defined period provides budget predictability and operational agility.

The adoption of these contractual strategies has yielded significant benefits, including:

- **Cost Efficiency:** By leveraging flexible and project-based contracts, GL have achieved a 10% reduction in labour costs without compromising on quality.
- **Enhanced Productivity:** Performance-based contracts have motivated employees to exceed targets, resulting in a 10% increase in overall productivity.

- **Talent Acquisition and Retention:** Flexible work arrangements have attracted top talent and improved employee satisfaction, leading to a 10% decrease in turnover rates.

Next steps

While the challenges of the past year tested our resilience, they also provided us with valuable insights and opportunities for growth. Moving forward, GL is committed to building on this momentum, continuing to invest in our employees, and fostering a culture of innovation and learning. We are confident that these efforts will drive further success and strengthen GL future.

As we move forward, GL remains committed to continuously evaluating and refining our contractual strategies to ensure they align with our strategic objectives and budgetary requirements. We believe that these innovative approaches will not only drive GL success but also create a more dynamic and resilient workforce. GL proactive and adaptive approach will continue to yield positive results.



GL Staff born in March celebrate their birthdays during staff planning.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Partnerships

by Priscilla Maposa



At Gender Links, we believe that partnerships are essential to achieving our vision and mission. Throughout the year, we have worked with a diverse range of partners at local, regional, and global levels. These partnerships have been instrumental in amplifying our impact, leveraging resources, and building a stronger, more inclusive movement for gender equality.

At the **local level**, Gender Links continues to partner with and leverage government departments and agencies, local authorities, community-based organisations, and civil society organisations to advance our work and interests. In particular, local authorities have remained as the entry point to all local-level programming in Gender Links country offices. These partners have provided invaluable insights into the specific needs and challenges of their communities, allowing Gender Links to develop strategies for a lasting impact. For example, the partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and local authorities in Zimbabwe has seen the continued implementation of the gender main-streaming programme which has since evolved in that country. The Women, Voice and Leadership (WVL) programme in South Africa has set the tone on how to work with local civil society organisations. This is also the same in other countries like Botswana and Mauritius.

Regionally, Gender Links continues to work with the **Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance** (a network of civil society organisations) to advance and monitor the implementation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. The Alliance is particularly pivotal in monitoring elections in various Southern African countries. 2024 is lined up with various elections across the region, and the Alliance will be pivotal in the monitoring and provision of data on these.



Other regional partners including the **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**, **Amplify Change (AC)**, and **AWOME (Accelerating Women Owned Micro-Enterprises)** have advanced gender equality and women's empowerment across Southern Africa. Gender Links work has also cascaded to other parts of Africa to cover programmes in countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia and other African countries. These partnerships have facilitated the sharing of best practices, expertise, and resources, enabling Gender Links to tackle complex issues such as gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health and rights, women's political participation, and economic and climate justice among other issues.

GL's global presence has seen the organization leveraging resources, expertise, and influence. These partnerships have enabled us to tap into global knowledge and networks, stay abreast of international best practices, and advocate for gender equality and women's rights at the highest levels. The **Women of the South Speak Out (WOSSO)** programme is one such programme with an international focus.

Our donors (including bi-lateral, multi-lateral and foundations) have been invaluable partners in our work, providing critical funding and support to our programs and initiatives. Donors are not just funders, but also partners who share our vision. Working with Foundations, particularly the Bill & Melinda Gates and Irene M. Staehelin Foundations have opened up new avenues and endless possibilities outside of traditional funding sources. Gender Links' financial stability would not be possible without the support of our donors.

In addition, the media has played a key role in amplifying the work that Gender Links does. Constant media engagements at all levels have seen the GL footprint beyond just its physical offices. Partnerships are therefore essential to organisational sustainability and success. By working together with a diverse range of partners, we amplify our impact and reach, leverage resources and expertise, build a stronger and more inclusive movement for gender equality.

In conclusion, partnerships are a cornerstone of our success at Gender Links. We are grateful for the support and collaboration of our partners and we look forward to the continuity.



WOSSO partners during a capacity strengthening workshop.

Photo: Gender Links

Good governance

by Debrah Mukuku



Once every year, GL has undertaken an internal Institutional Health check using a score card based on various due diligence conducted by donors. The score card mirrors the pillars of GL's 2020- 2025 Strategy. Board, management and staff participate anonymously in the scoring. The table summarises the latest scores as at 2024.

	2024
Strategic Positioning Average	89%
Legitimacy for its work	91%
Vision, Mission, and Core Values	89%
Formulation of Relevant Strategies	85%
Governance Average	81%
Governance Structures	79%
Application of democratic rule	82%
Programme of Action Average	86%
Planning for implementation	85%
Working methods	80%
Reporting and documentation	92%
Follow up	89%
Partnerships and Target Groups	86%
Institutional Strengthening Average	81%
Physical resources	85%
Electronic resources	85%
Administrative and financial routines	85%
Human resources	80%
Financial sustainability Average	91%
Financial policies and procedures	91%
Long term financial planning and resource mobilisation and VFM	90%
Total (Average)	85%

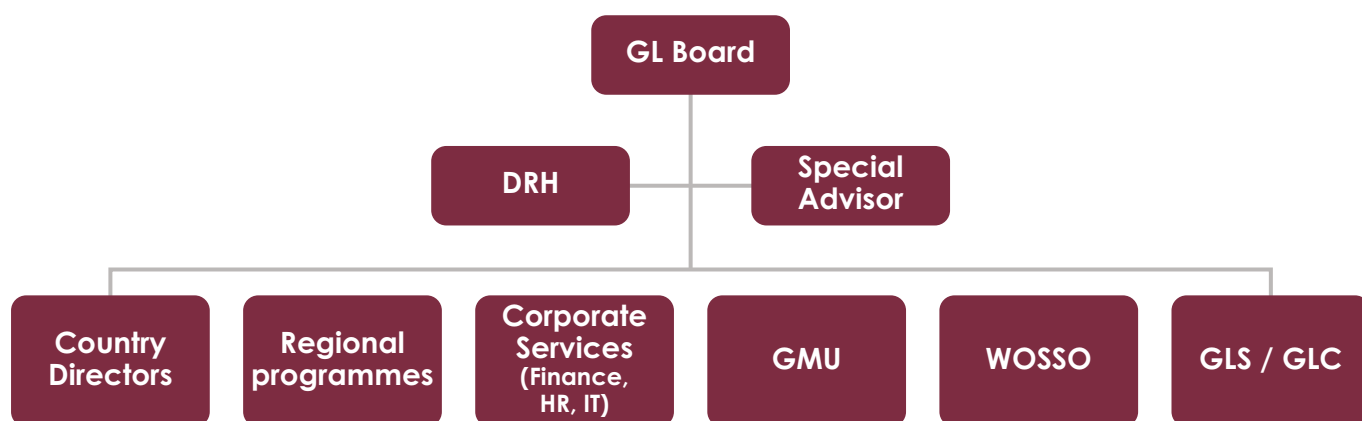
Previously, Gender Links has scored relatively lower in the area of Governance as compared to other pillars of the organisational framework. As at the year 2024, GL's governance was rated at 81%, lower than the average score of 85%. This was a result of a combination of several factors such as review of governance documents, skills set of Board members, gender and other governance principles. This year past, however, GL has made big strides towards revisiting the various aspects of its governance. Gender Links conducted a thorough review of its governing document, the Memorandum of incorporation and had it lodged by CIPC successfully.

GL also changed its Financial year from the calendar year January to December to April to December. In addition, GL received an unqualified audit for the 2023/24 Financial Year. To further improve and encourage good governance, the Board members of Gender Links received an intensive Corporate Governance Training from the Company secretarial services of Infinity Bough, an organisation outsourced for secretarial services.

Organisational Design: Co-creating a GL fit for purpose in the march to 2030

As with any living organism, Gender Links has evolved and reinvented itself over the years to suit the ever-changing needs of donors, align with global funding trends, remain relevant to its stakeholders, and serve its beneficiaries and partners. In addition, Gender Links has had to constantly revisit the organisational model to meet its dynamic operational requirements.

The year 2023/24 saw Gender Links repositioning as an agile, flexible and resilient organisation that is able to withstand the vagaries of donor funding and pivot easily during a crisis. This model was instrumental in making GL an innovative organisation that draws and leverages on all possible resources.



The main highlight of the 2023/24 period was the joint meeting of the Gender Links (GL) Association, Board and Management to revisit the purpose and ways of working in the countdown to 2030, the target for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). This meeting took place against the backdrop of shrinking regional funding, and the closure of four country offices in early 2023 due to lack of funding. In light of this challenge, Gender Links coordinated a donor round-table characterised by a partner Consultation on Organisational Design and Sustainability, with panellists from three regional and three international organisations being Irene M. Stahler Foundation, Amplify Change and Action Aid who shared invaluable insights.

Following this significant event, Gender Links embarked onto a ground breaking exercise of decentralisation which saw the organisational structure change drastically from one that is less top down, more bottom up, leaving the Regional Hub which was previously the Headquarters being only an enabling centre.

Gender Links then proceeded to set up local Boards in three of its country offices: **Lesotho**, **Mauritius** and **Zimbabwe**. GL put out an open call to invite individuals with diverse skills, expertise, and a shared commitment to the organisation's purpose, to apply to be voluntary members of the GL Board in their respective countries. Thorough interviews were conducted and successful candidates were enrolled into the local Boards of these country offices, making it clear that the main purpose of these Boards was primarily to raise funds. The members of the local Boards are jointly and severally liable for Gender Links financial affairs in their countries.

Each resident Country Board member has the duty to oversee the operations of that particular office and provides financial and governance oversight. The country Board members will be furnished with quarterly financial accounts and detailed reports of their country operations. In some cases, they will be called upon to act as bank signatories for their country offices. Subsequently, the Chairs of



Gender Links Board and Staff members.

Photo: Gender Links

these local Boards then were appointed as members of the Regional Board.

Furthermore, the Regional Board proceeded to establish committees to address specific focus areas, and committee charters will be developed to guide their functions. Currently, the Board has established the following committees:

- Executive Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee ("ARC")
- Programmes Committee
- Organisational Development Committee ("OD Committee")
- GL Services Committee (previously known as the Diversification committee)

Integrity Policies:

GL updated several policies during the period 2023/24 in line with global and civil society trends to enhance integrity, transparency and accountability. GL's suite of Integrity Policies is on the staff intranet and made public here <https://genderlinks.org.za/who-we-are/integrity-policies/>.

Key additions to policies included the introduction of the **Anti-Terrorism policy**, a requirement that comes with the terrain as GL enters the global circles with FCDO, EU and other global players like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. GL has also gone a step further and made use of modern innovation to introduce staff policy quizzes using the Survey Gizmo tool. This is a way of making sure that GL Staff actually engage with policies and understand them.

Next steps

- Finalisation of registration processes in all GL countries that have secured in country funding, being Lesotho, Mauritius and Zimbabwe.
- Finalising the Memorandum of Agreement between Gender Links regional and Country offices.
- Ensuring that compliance remains GL top priority including staying in good standing with the South African Revenue Authorities and regularizing the VAT matter.
- Rolling out staff quizzes for the rest of the Integrity policies and continuous staff building capacity.



The WOSSO team - Gender Links, Arrow, Mannion Daniels and FCDO UK.

Photo: Gender Links

GL Cottages and conferencing



Together with GL Advisory Services, the GL Cottages and Conferencing is GL's flagship sustainability project. 2022 witnessed a huge come back for GL Cottages after the COVID-19 pandemic. GLC has maintained a good pool of customers, largely from the NGO world. About 80% are repeat customers which shows that services offered are appreciated by our valued customers. In December 2023 GLC embarked on repairs and maintenance of the facility. There were significant improvements in the room décor, gardens and driveway. This project depleted the reserves for GLC, however GLC is steadily recovering the income so that it remains generating an income that is sustainable.

Looking ahead, the key success factors that will contribute to the sustainability of the GL Cottages are as follows:

- **Investing in an alternative energy supply**, solar installations for geysers and critical equipment, backed up by the generator: GL Cottages has already started on procuring a solar system that will both reduce costs and at the same time manage business disruption due to frequent power cuts.
- **Aggressive marketing** and extensive networking: GL Cottages has now diversified its market reach outside of the usual civil society organisations, to extend its offerings to workers unions, school sporting groups and climate change advocacy and mining groups. GLC intends to extend reach to corporates in 2023.

- **Understanding industry trends** and keeping up with Federated Hotel standards
- **Staying up to date with latest conferencing technologies** to support virtual meetings: With many organisations now opting for hybrid conferences whereby some participants join virtually and others in person.
- **Upgrading GL Cottages rooms and facilities** to create a perfect ambience: Today's customers are spoilt for choice and hotels are faced with a lot of competition arising from Airbnb private houses being offered by individuals. This means that the facilities offered by the Cottages require continuous maintenance to remain relevant.
- **Continued upskilling of staff** especially with the threat of many of the foreign staff employed by the GLC being forced to return to their home countries due to visa restrictions.
- **Increasing capacity for conference facilities:** GLC has had to outsource bigger venues over the past two years to cater for guest sensitivities around Covid-19. GL Cottages will need to expand its own facilities to make this possible and reduce outsourced venues.



'Thank you for a great stay. It is always lovely to be working with you and the GL Cottages team'.

*Carmen Mannarino -
Programme Manager,
Food and Trees for Africa*

Financial highlights

The following financial excerpts are taken from the audited financial statements that follow to provide key analysis and insights

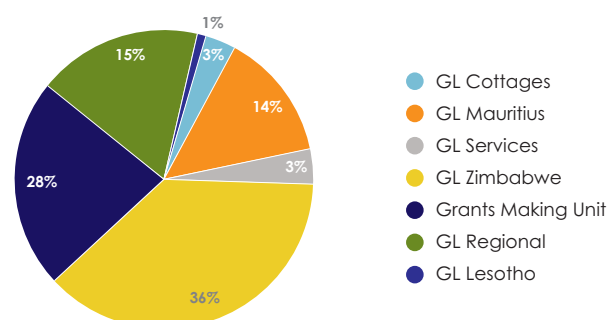
GL donors 2023-24

Donors	Total Funding-R	%
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Zimbabwe	42 117 809	43%
Amplify Change - Partnership Grant	19 308 500	20%
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Fund	11 648 551	12%
International Idea 2	3 349 148	3%
Gender Links Cottages	3 319 570	3%
Unrestricted Funding	3 971 197	4%
Global Affairs Canada - Women Voice and Leadership Project	2 523 235	3%
Diakonia Zimbabwe	2 392 162	2%
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)	1 788 574	2%
European Union - Zimbabwe	1 015 100	1%
Other Funding	5 838 636	6%
Total	97 272 483	100%

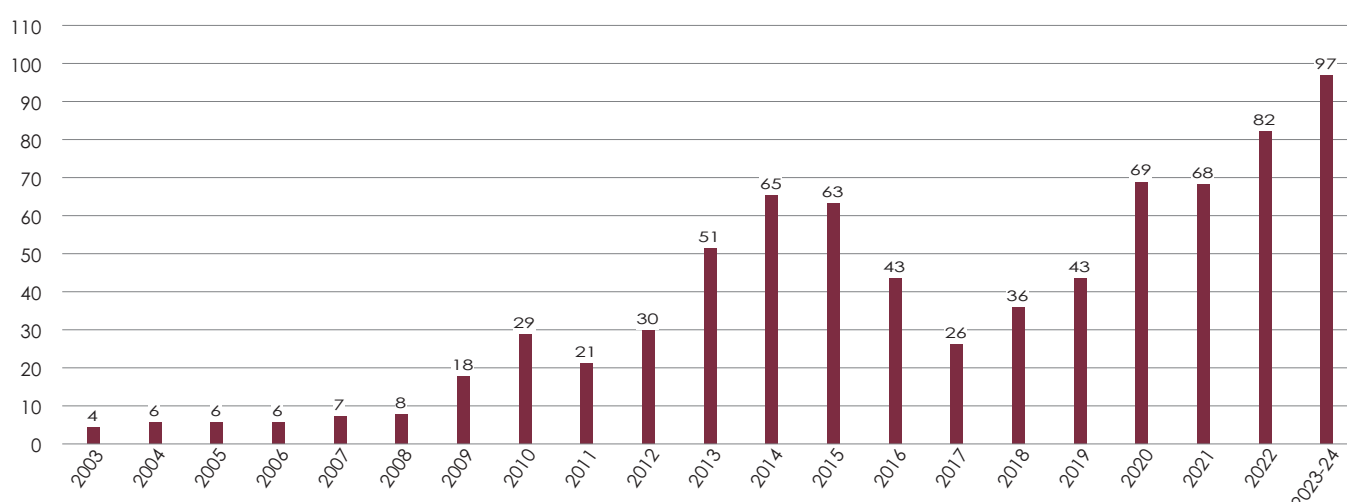
GL's total funding for the period January 2023 to March 2024 amounted to just over R97 million, 43% of this from Sida Zimbabwe.

GL Zimbabwe (36%) accounted for the highest budget, followed by 28% for the Grants Unit, 15% GL Regional programmes, and 14% for GL Mauritius. The income generating units (GL Cottages and GL Services) accounted for 6% of income.

GL Total Budget 2023-24 by branch



GL funding in ZAR (million) by year



Viewed over time, after the funding crisis of 2017 to 2019, GL has managed to keep growing its funding base in rands. This grew from R82 million in 2022 to R97 million in 2023-2024 with the caveat

that that 2023 to 2024 year is 15 months, as GL changed its financial year from the calendar year to April to March.



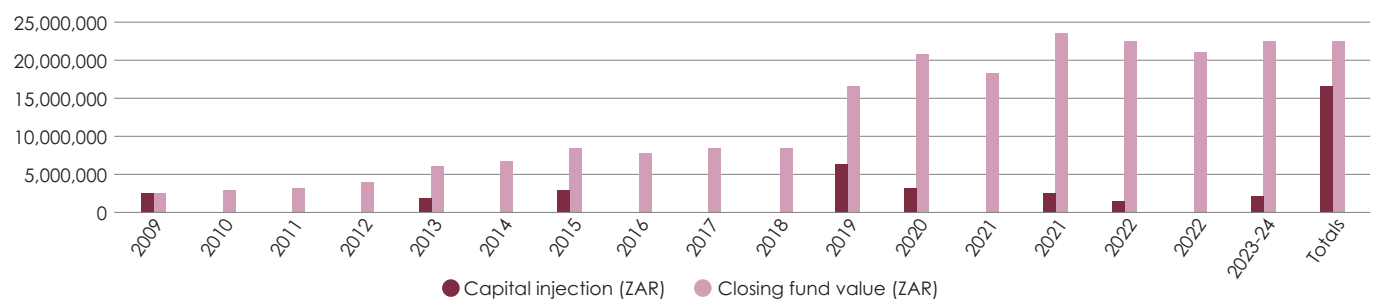
FUTUREFUND

for GENERATIONEQUALITY

The GLFF is Gender Links' (GLs) endowment fund established in 2009 by the then Board Chair, Dr Muna Ndulo, to enhance GL's sustainability. Although the fund represents only a small proportion of what GL would require to function in any given year, it is unique in that the funds are

untied and can be invested in high risk, high return investments, in a way that is not possible with donor funds. Given the many demands for unrestricted funding, this poses challenges but also opportunities.

GL funding in ZAR (million) by year



The chart shows that the GL Future Fund closed at R22 million, following withdrawals in 2022 to cover donor shortfalls, and in early 2024 to provide cash flow buffer for the sale of GL offices and purchase of the house next door to the GL Cottages in order to consolidate GL operations. But at 46% return on investment is high and needs to be sustained.

Looking to the future

GL needs to double down on savings, and minimise use of the GLFF to cover routine financial management. This will need to be balanced against genuine core cost institutional needs that fall within the criteria of the fund. These include catalytic programmes; governance and systems costs that enhance GL's core values.

Financial report

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Directors' Responsibilities and Approval

The directors are required by the Companies Act of South Africa, to maintain adequate accounting records and are responsible for the content and integrity of the annual financial statements and related financial information included in this report. It is their responsibility to ensure that the annual financial statements fairly present the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and the results of its operations and cash flows for the period then ended, in conformity with the basis of accounting described in Note 1. The external auditors are engaged to express an independent opinion on the annual financial statements.

The annual financial statements are prepared in accordance with the basis of accounting described in Note 1 and are based upon appropriate accounting policies consistently applied and supported by reasonable and prudent judgements and estimates

The directors acknowledge that they are ultimately responsible for the system of internal financial control established by the company and place considerable importance on maintaining a strong control environment. To enable the directors to meet these responsibilities, the board sets standards for internal control aimed at reducing the risk of error or loss in a cost effective manner. The standards include the proper delegation of responsibilities within a clearly defined framework, effective accounting procedures and adequate segregation of duties to ensure an acceptable level of risk. These controls are monitored throughout the company and all employees are required to maintain the highest ethical standards in ensuring the company's business is conducted in a manner that in all reasonable circumstances is above reproach. The focus of risk management in the company is on identifying, assessing, managing and monitoring all known forms of risk across the company. While operating risk cannot be fully eliminated, the company endeavours to minimise it by ensuring that appropriate infrastructure, controls, systems and ethical behaviour are applied and managed within predetermined procedures and constraints.

The directors are of the opinion, based on the information and explanations given by management, that the system of internal control provides reasonable assurance that the financial records may be relied on for the preparation of the annual financial statements. However, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable, and not absolute, assurance against material misstatement or loss.

The directors have reviewed the company's cash flow forecast for the year to 31 March 2025 and, in light of this review and the current financial position, they are satisfied that the company has or has access to adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The external auditors are responsible for independently auditing and reporting on the company's annual financial statements. The annual financial statements have been examined by the company's external auditors and their report is presented on pages 6 to 7.

The annual audited financial statements set out on pages 8 to 26, which have been prepared on the going concern basis, were approved by the board of directors on 30 September 2024 and were signed on their behalf by:

Approval of financial statements

Morna Colleen Anne



Brown Emily





MIDDEL & PARTNERS
Chartered Accountants (SA), Registered Auditors

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Shareholder of Gender Links (Non-Profit Company)

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Gender Links (Non-Profit Company) (the company) set out on 8 to 26, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 March 2024; and the statement of comprehensive income; the statement of changes in equity; and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended; and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Gender Links (Non-Profit Company) as at 31 March 2024, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities and the requirements of the Companies Act of South Africa.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors' Code of Professional Conduct for Registered Auditors (IRBA Code) and other independence requirements applicable to performing audits of financial statements in South Africa. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the IRBA Code and in accordance with other ethical requirements applicable to performing audits in South Africa. The IRBA Code is consistent with the corresponding sections of the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards). We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the document titled "Gender Links (Non-Profit Company) financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024", which includes the Director's Report as required by the Companies Act of South Africa and the supplementary information as set out on 27 to 30. The other information does not include the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express an audit opinion or any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

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Independent Auditor's Report

Responsibilities of the Director for the Financial Statements

The directors are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the IFRS for SMEs Accounting Standard as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board and the requirements of the Companies Act of South Africa, and for such internal control as the director determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the director either intends to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the company's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the director's use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the company to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the director regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.



Middel & Partners
Gabriel Francois Van Linghe Froneman
Partner
Chartered Accountants (SA)
Registered Auditors

10 February 2025
Johannesburg

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Statement of Changes in Equity

Figures in Rand	Operational reserve	Accumulated surplus	Total equity
Balance at 01 January 2022	443 521	39 173 674	39 617 195
Deficit for the year	-	(1 633 668)	(1 633 668)
Other comprehensive income	(120 913)	-	(120 913)
Total comprehensive deficit for the year	(120 913)	(1 633 668)	(1 754 581)
Balance at 01 January 2023	322 608	37 540 006	37 862 614
Deficit for the period	-	(1 376 877)	(1 376 877)
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-
Total comprehensive deficit for the period	-	(1 376 877)	(1 376 877)
Balance at 31 March 2024	322 608	36 163 129	36 485 737

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Notes to the Annual Financial Statements

	15 months ended 31 March 2024	12 months ended 31 December 2022
Figures in Rand		
8. Funds received in advance		
Funds Received in Advance comprise:		
Amplify Change Partnership Grant	5 600 814	8 373 603
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	2 144 106	-
CIM Finance - Mauritius	(22 646)	(22 646)
Canada Fund for Local Initiative - Lesotho	-	5 551
Climate Justice Resilience Fund	-	386 296
Common wealth foundation Mauritius	323 023	-
Corporate Social Responsibility Donors Mauritius	587 228	681 069
Diakonia Zimbabwe	950 905	-
European Union - Lesotho	-	86 017
European Union - Mauritius	(484 196)	1 641 463
European Union - Zimbabwe	511 548	333 412
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	53 883	-
Freedom House - ARISA	-	24 257
Fund for the International Development of Archives (FIDA) Lesotho	2 964	2 964
German Society for International Cooperation - HQ	25 475	25 475
Global Affairs Canada - Women Voice and Leadership Project	10 487 977	1 735 146
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation - Mauritius	25 416	157 333
International IDEA	2 236 233	-
Irene M. Staehelin Foundation	2 266 195	-
Kaleidoscope	311 644	507 475
Kaleidoscope Trust 2	115 103	-
Safe Haven Mauritius	3 160 325	2 706 262
Solidarity Fund	123 209	123 208
State Bank of Mauritius (SBM)	(64 906)	72 281
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Zimbabwe	(758 659)	15 485 881
The African Women's Development Fund: Leading From The South	1 076 768	356 768
URGENT Action Fund-Africa	(4 264)	-
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	-	227 816
United Nations Populations Fund (Lesotho)	-	34 064
Water Aid	(11 149)	-
	28 656 996	32 943 695
Split between non-current and current portions		
Non-current liabilities	28 656 996	32 943 695
9. Other financial liability		
Other financial liability	960 831	-

Solar system right of use asset which is a project asset and will remain property of the relevant project till ownership transfers or the asset is disposed, usually at the end of the project arrangement. Additional text

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Detailed Income Statement

Figures in Rand	Notes	15 months ended 31 March 2024	12 months ended 31 December 2022
Revenue			
Donor funds		90 959 336	50 574 786
Revenue from Gender Links Cottages		5 037 149	4 333 291
Revenue from Gender Links Services		2 899 018	2 030 538
	11	98 895 503	56 938 615
Cost of sales			
Cost of sales - Gender Links Cottages		(2 455 224)	(1 834 237)
Gross surplus		96 440 279	55 104 378
Other income			
Recognition of operational reserve		1 098 612	1 048 861
Individual donations		-	46 590
	13	1 098 612	1 095 451
Other operating losses			
Losses on disposal of assets		(427 587)	(5 644)
Impairment losses		(454 064)	-
Foreign exchange gains (losses)		999 857	(766 180)
Fair value gains (losses)		5 479 154	(1 052 554)
		5 597 360	(1 824 378)
Expenses (Refer to page 28)		(104 962 063)	(56 431 728)
Operating deficit	14	(1 825 812)	(2 056 277)
Investment income	15	562 013	427 988
Finance costs	16	(113 078)	(5 379)
Deficit for the period		(1 376 877)	(1 633 668)

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Detailed Income Statement

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	15 months ended 31 March 2024	12 months ended 31 December 2022
Operating expenses			
Administrative Expenses: Auditors remuneration		22 790	256 705
Administrative Expenses: Bank charges		77 540	74 882
Administrative Expenses: Operational costs		11 764 180	5 442 118
Administrative Expenses: Planning		141 184	311 629
Administrative Expenses: Utilisation of reserve operations		2 783 799	1 314 993
Other Expenses: CAPEX		1 703 553	217 875
Other Expenses: Depreciation, amortisation and impairments		362 610	315 889
Other Expenses: Human resources		26 282 398	15 183 987
Other Expenses: IT and Financial Systems		-	212 261
Other Expenses: Repairs and maintenance		380 580	247 507
Other Expenses: Results for Change, Monitoring and Evaluation		-	1 908 502
Other Expenses: Write Offs		-	827 578
Programmes: Economic Power to End Gender Violence		1 227 728	5 207 230
Programmes: Women of the South Speak Out		5 627 126	-
Programmes: Fifty Fifty Women's Political Participation		798 698	2 594 645
Programmes: Gender and Media		264 737	807 886
Programmes: Gender-based Violence Advocacy		785 519	1 543 324
Programmes: Local Action for Gender Justice		37 726 378	3 073 001
Programmes: SADC Gender Protocol Alliance		371 994	1 178 631
Programmes: SADC Gender Protocol Barometer		-	645 201
Programmes: Voice and Choice Summit		-	2 996 727
Sub-Granting: Voice and Choice Grants		12 342 631	503 584
Sub-Granting: Voice and Choice Capacity Building		1 379 949	950 174
Sub-Granting: Women Voice and Leadership (WVL) Capacity Building		-	269 874
Sub-Granting: Women Voice and Leadership WVL Grants		918 669	10 347 525
		104 962 063	56 431 728

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Supplementary Information

1. Donors - Actual Receipts

Donor	Funds Received in advance - opening balances 31 December 2022	Actual fund received in 31 March 2024	Total Funds Available in 31 March 2024	Total expenditure	Funds moved to general income	Total funds available (deferral)
Amplify Change - Partnership Grant	8 373 603	16 590 144	24 963 747	19 362 933	-	5 600 814
Freedom House - ARISA	24 257	-	24 257	24 257	-	-
African Woman Development Fund - LFS	356 768	2 063 260	2 420 028	809 340	533 920	1 076 768
Bill and Melinda gates Foundation	-	5 157 404	5 157 404	3 013 298	-	2 144 106
Canada Fund For Local Initiative - Lesotho	5 551	-	5 551	-	5 551	-
Civicus - Lesotho	-	176 625	176 625	184 375	(7 750)	-
CIM Finance - Mauritius	(22 646)	-	(22 646)	-	-	(22 646)
Common wealth foundation Mauritius	-	332 348	332 348	9 325	-	323 023
Climate Justice Resilience Fund	386 296	-	386 296	386 296	-	-
Corporate Social Responsibility Donors Mauritius	681 069	364 922	1 045 991	458 763	-	587 228
Diakonia Zimbabwe	-	3 343 068	3 343 068	2 392 163	-	950 905
European Union - Lesotho	86 017	675 100	761 117	678 142	82 975	-
European Union - Mauritius	1 641 463	-	1 641 463	2 125 659	-	(484 196)
European Union - Zimbabwe	333 412	1 193 236	1 526 648	1 015 100	-	511 548
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	-	11 637 243	11 637 243	11 583 360	-	53 883
FIDA Lesotho	2 964	-	2 964	-	-	2 964
German Society for International Cooperation - HQ	25 475	-	25 475	-	-	25 475
Global Affairs Canada - Women Voice and Leadership Project	1 735 146	278 820	2 013 966	2 523 235	(509 269)	-
Women, Voice and Leadership	-	10 487 977	10 487 977	-	-	10 487 977
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) - Mauritius	157 333	-	157 333	131 917	-	25 416
International Idea	-	5 585 382	5 585 382	3 349 149	-	2 236 233
Irene M Stahler Foundation	-	3 000 000	3 000 000	733 805	-	2 266 195
Kaleidoscope	507 475	474 497	981 972	670 328	-	311 644
Kaleidoscope 2	-	122 035	122 035	6 932	-	115 103
NSIF Safe Haven Mauritius	2 706 262	2 327 140	5 033 402	1 873 077	-	3 160 325
Solidarity Fund	123 208	-	123 208	-	(1)	123 209
State Bank of Mauritius (SBM)	72 281	-	72 281	137 187	-	(64 906)
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Zimbabwe	15 485 881	25 873 269	41 359 150	42 117 809	-	(758 659)
The Water Aid Project	-	541 472	541 472	552 621	-	(11 149)
URGENT Action Fund-Africa	-	182 000	182 000	186 264	-	(4 264)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	227 816	-	227 816	264 738	(36 922)	-
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - Lesotho 2	34 064	-	34 064	-	34 064	-
	32 943 695	90 405 942	123 349 637	94 590 073	102 568	28 656 996

Gender Links NPC

(Registration number 2001/005850/08)

Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Supplementary Information

2. Donor Funds Spent

Donor	Donor Funds Spent 31 March 2024	Donor Funds Spent 31 December 2022
African Women's Development Fund	809 340	-
Amplify Change Strategic Grant 2	-	3 769 059
Amplify Change Partnership Grant	19 362 933	4 681 945
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	3 013 298	770 771
Canada Fund For Local Initiative - Lesotho	-	102 068
Common wealth foundation Mauritius	9 325	-
Civicus - Lesotho	184 375	-
CIM Finance - Mauritius	-	241 851
Climate Justice Resilience Fund	386 296	413 924
Corporate Social Responsibility Donors Mauritius	-	59 560
Diakonia Zimbabwe	2 392 163	2 853 947
European Union - Botswana (MAB)	-	39 300
European Union - Lesotho	678 142	567 180
European Union - Mauritius	2 125 659	827 685
European Union - Zimbabwe	1 015 100	1 111 396
Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	11 583 360	-
Fund for the International Development of Archives (FIDA) Lesotho	-	42 774
Freedom House - ARISA	24 257	172 368
Irene M Stahler Foundation	733 805	-
Global Affairs Canada - Women Voice and Leadership Project	2 523 235	14 962 828
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) - Mauritius	131 917	160 497
International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) Zimbabwe	-	97 129
International Idea	3 349 149	2 663 657
International Idea 2	-	362 543
Kaleidoscope Trust	670 328	558 928
MITSUI O.S.K - MOL	458 763	84 589
NSIF Safe Haven Mauritius	1 873 077	1 480 789
Solidarity Fund	-	624 165
Kaleidoscope Trust	6 932	-
State Bank of Mauritius (SBM)	137 187	276 608
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Zimbabwe	42 117 809	846 562
The African Women's Development Fund : Leading From The South	-	495 999
The Water Aid Project	552 621	244 174
URGENT Action Fund-Africa	186 264	-
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	264 738	109 929
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) - Lesotho	-	743 864
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)	-	151 675
- Media	-	-
UN Trust Fund	-	12 616 706
	94 590 073	52 134 470

How you can help



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