



AXUM

Gender Links Organisational Assessment

Final Report

March 2025

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Gender Links selected Axum to conduct an external assessment of its organisational effectiveness to identify key challenges and achievements and offer recommendations to support it becoming a center of excellence for gender integration services in Africa.

Specifically, the assessment set out to achieve three key objectives: (i) assess the overall efficiency and effectiveness of GL in fulfilling its vision and mission and make recommendations that will add to its success; (ii) highlight key strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats which will inform GL's future strategic planning processes, and (iii) devise an action plan for strengthening GL institutionally based on the findings.

To aid the assessment, an organisational effectiveness framework was developed, drawing on GL's existing practices. The framework defined 37 sub-components to explore, grouped across six overarching dimensions:

- Strategic positioning
- Governance and leadership
- Programme of action
- Results for change
- Institutional effectiveness
- Sustainability

Additionally, based on recent context, the assessment sought to gain deeper insights into two areas of interest (under sustainability and governance and leadership) that have the potential to strengthen GL's resilience:

- 1. Assessing the extent to which the organisation has the capacity to deliver GL Services at scale:** as the income-generating arm of the organisation, GL Services provides a strong opportunity for Gender Links to build resilience in the face of the dwindling donor funding landscape.
- 2. Assessing the effectiveness of the decentralised model and country boards:** with the intent of uncovering whether the recent establishment of country boards in Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Lesotho can further strengthen the sustainability and impact of GL.



Leveraging a combination of ~50 interviews, a staff survey, observations, and document reviews to assess GL's performance/capacity across the six framework components, the following findings were ascertained:

- **Strategic positioning: GL's strategic positioning is widely recognised, with most staff affirming the clarity of GL's vision, mission, values, and strategy.**
 - Key strengths include a well-understood mandate (even among donors), an inclusive culture that fosters teamwork and purpose, and a decentralised strategy development approach that enables contextualized implementation
 - However, challenges remain in aligning long-term strategy development with shifting funder priorities and integrating work-life balance as part of the organisational culture
- **Governance and leadership: GL generally has a strong governance board with clear decision-making frameworks and policies. Still, decision-making powers could be clarified at some levels, and mechanisms are required to mitigate against the disbandment of country operations from the organisation.**
 - Key strengths include active regional and country boards that set organisational direction, a mostly clear and inclusive decision-making framework, particularly at the regional board and country levels, and well-documented and functional policies and frameworks for governance and operations
 - However, unclear delineation of decision-making power between the Association and the Regional Board, the disbandment of Mozambique operation, and inconsistent staff support highlight gaps in governance and leadership effectiveness

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- **Programme of Action: GL successfully aligns its programmes with local contexts, the needs of target groups, and partner priorities. However, limited internal knowledge of gender-focused funders and intermittent engagement with other NGOs pose risks to programming efforts.**
 - Key strengths include (i) localised programmes that reflect the country context and needs of target communities (e.g. the Safe Haven shelter addressing the scale of gender-based violence issues in Mauritius and providing empowerment programs that give female victims the tools needed to live a fulfilling life); (ii) established and collaborative relationships with donors and local governments (e.g. the strong commitment and collaboration with local authorities that the Zimbabwe office has achieved with its various programmes), (iii) and an impactful WOSSO program
 - However, there are opportunities for GL to expand the number and type of funders sought out for programmes, improve its engagement with the SADC Protocol Alliance, and provide more structured post-program support for fellows.
- **Results for change: GL has an established monitoring and evaluation system. However, there is room to expand data collection and dissemination tools to adequately capture impact indicators/stories and improve the quality of donor reporting.**
 - Key strengths include established M&E processes, templates, and diverse data collection tools that capture key programme information; ability to meet basic donor reporting requirements; and strong financial transparency and resource tracking for programs
 - However, challenges remain relating to the capacity/size of the M&E team; the ability to holistically track and measure programme impact; and the quality of donor reporting. Addressing these gaps (as well as strengthening data analysis, storytelling, and internal learning mechanisms) can enhance GL's ability to adequately share its impact and unlock further funding opportunities



- **Institutional effectiveness: Gender Links faces significant institutional effectiveness gaps, particularly in HR planning, succession planning, staffing levels, capacity building, and external communications.**
 - Key strengths include a mostly functional organisational structure that supports operations; highly hardworking, committed, and agile staff; and robust and transparent financial management
 - However, major challenges include (i) insufficient HR planning, (ii) undefined succession plans, (iii) overstretched staff that lack adequate upskilling support, and (iv) undefined communication strategy and under-resourced communication efforts which limit GL's ability to effectively share its impact and enhance its visibility.
- **Sustainability: While Gender Links has an exemplary funding model and has a track record of successfully mobilizing resources, there are opportunities to strengthen its income-generating activities.**
 - GL Cottages: while the Cottages consistently generate income and serve as a safe space for marginalized communities (e.g. LGBTI), challenges relating to the outdated facility, poor service, and infrastructure bottlenecks hinder its full revenue potential
 - GL Grant Management: GL's Grant Making Unit runs efficiently and shows promise for scalability, though upskilling staff in proposal development is needed
 - GL Advisory Services: GL has strong credibility in gender integration, but the potential of its advisory services remains largely unrealised. While it has a flexible structure, it lacks centralised planning and depth. In addition, teams report staffing and upskilling gaps, leading to project execution inefficiencies

It is important to recognize that while all the framework components are important, they vary in their ability to catalyse GL's effectiveness. Given the breadth of the findings, an attempt was made to identify a shorter list of critical areas for organisational improvement, based on both (i) the extent of the gaps in performance/capabilities (ii) its importance to GL's future success. Subsequently, these considerations informed a list of high-priority recommendations to strengthen GL going forward.



Based on the analysis, the following critical recommendations were highlighted:

- 1) Enhance GL's MEL, knowledge management, and external communications mechanisms:** GL can strengthen its MEL capacity, knowledge management, and data analysis to improve GL's ability to track impact, enhance donor reporting, and inform strategic decisions. Further, stronger external communications efforts will increase GL's visibility as a leader in gender advocacy and integration. Key activities could include:
 - **Hire an experienced Communications Manager** to coordinate and execute awareness-building efforts
 - **Developing a communications strategy** to support with strengthening GL's visibility
 - **Recruiting additional MEL capacity** to assist country teams and advice on the enhancement of M&E plans, data collection methods and data management/use
 - **Upgrading and enforcing the use of a centralised digital repository**, where all past documents are systematically stored and categorized. Include key features such as a resource library by topic, and data dashboards.
 - **Developing standardised reporting templates** that integrate infographics, storytelling, data visualization and case studies for different audiences
- 2) Establish a plan for GL Advisory Services and expand its team capacity:** Unlocking GL Advisory's potential will enable GL to become a center of excellence for Gender Integration services in Africa, while contributing to its long-term financial sustainability. Key activities to achieve this may include:
 - **Conduct a market demand assessment of gender integration services in Africa** and analyse how GL Advisory services' offerings align with market needs
 - **Establishing a high-level unit plan** at the start of each year to define the type of work, topics, and funders the advisory team aims to pursue based on market demand. This would enable the team to have a sense of direction, prioritize efforts, track progress, and be proactive
 - **Appropriately staffing associates** (and recruit more where necessary) to support with capacity and reduce instances of rejecting projects due to limited staff availability



- 3) **Expand donor engagement efforts and internal fundraising capabilities:** While GL has a proven track record fundraising from donors, diversifying its funding sources is crucial. Therefore, GL should expand its donor engagement efforts and build its in-house fundraising capabilities. Key activities could include:
- **Conducting a donor mapping exercise** to identify new gender-focused funders, private sector partners, and philanthropic donors aligned with GL's mission
 - **Hiring experienced personnel to support business development**/fundraising efforts or identifying internal staff that can solely spend time on pipeline development
- 4) **Renovate GL Cottages:** Renovating GL facilities and infrastructure will enable in realizing its full potential, attracting a larger customer pool and continuing to generate revenue that will contribute to GL's long-term sustainability. Key activities to achieve this may include:
- **Undertaking a high-level analysis** before renovating to understand the potential benefits, costs, risks, and implementation timeline
 - **Updating the rooms to improve comfort**, e.g. adjustable shower heads, curtains/blinds, larger cooling/heating appliances
 - **Purchasing water pumps to better distribute water from boreholes** across the property. Investing in solar power to reduce dependence on the national grid
 - **Developing a framework to provide guidance** on the processes and procedures required to manage the Cottages efficiently and effectively



- 5) **Strengthen HR Planning and defining capacity needs:** To appropriately address existing staffing gaps, GL needs to strengthen its workforce planning by defining internal capacity needs and gaps and filling them as needed. Key activities could include:
- **Hiring an HR lead or outsourcing HR functions**
 - **Develop an HR plan and strategy** for workforce planning, talent development and succession planning
 - **Consult with staff to identify additional capacity needs**, and hire for core functions (e.g., communications, fundraising, HR)
 - **Ensure realistic budget allocation for key functions**, e.g. M&E, communications, and administrative activities. Consider incorporating the budget of these functions in proposals and program budgets
 - **Invest in a platform that integrates HR, finance, and programme functions** to alleviate the time spent on administration activities
 - **Implement wellness initiatives** to support staff mental health and address burnout, e.g. team bonding events, mental health days, and encouraging staff to use their annual leave
- 6) **Implement a succession plan and a talent development plan:** To facilitate continuity and sustainability over the long-term, GL should invest in defining its succession plan and talent development approaches. Key activities could include:
- **Defining an appropriate leadership structure and succession model for executive position.** There are three options to consider:
 - A CEO that carries all functions
 - Co-CEOs that lead the organisation together
 - Multiple directors anchoring critical workstreams and a CEO to provide leadership and oversight
 - **Establishing a leadership pipeline programme to mentor and develop internal talent** over 2-3 years, ensuring knowledge transfer and leadership readiness
 - **Conducting external recruitment to identify experienced candidates**, provide structured onboarding, and assign mentors to candidates, to facilitate transitions
 - **Implement an annual planning process to forecast potential leadership vacancies**, set clear timelines for transitions, and ensure proactive recruitment



- 7) **Conduct a governance review and restructure:** While GL has a strong and inclusive governance framework, unclear decision-making authority at some levels creates inefficiencies. As such, GL should implement a governance refinement strategy that enhances clarity, while maintaining strategic alignment. Key activities could include:
- **Refining the function/role between the Association and regional board** and provide clarity on the nature of the relationship and powers assigned to each
 - **Reviewing the decision-making matrix and define which governance body has final decision-making and veto power** over key strategic and operational matters
 - **Introducing an annual governance review process**, assessing decision-making efficiency, power distribution, and role clarity at all levels

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Gender Links (GL) is a Southern African NGO that champions gender equality and justice through research, advocacy, and movement building



Vision

To **promote 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.

Mission

To **champion gender equality** and justice through research, advocacy, linking and learning, movement, and institution building in **Southern Africa and beyond**.

Areas of Focus

- Sexual reproductive health and rights
- Economic Justice
- Climate Justice
- Women's political participation
- Gender, media, and ICT

Pathways to change

- Global feminist leadership and movement-building
- Regional advocacy and stakeholder coordination
- Local Action for Gender Justice
- Financial empowerment of local partners

Core offerings

- Gender-focused program implementation
- Advisory services
- Grant management
- Research
- Publications
- Accommodation and conferencing services

Country coverage

- South Africa
- Zimbabwe
- Lesotho
- Mauritius
- Botswana

Axum was engaged to conduct an organisational review of Gender Links and develop a prioritized action plan*



External assessment overall goal

To assess **GLs' overall organisational effectiveness** in implementing its vision and mission, identify **key challenges and achievements**, and **offer recommendations** to inform future programming implementation.

Key objectives

Axum's external evaluation of Gender Links will deliver on three key objectives:

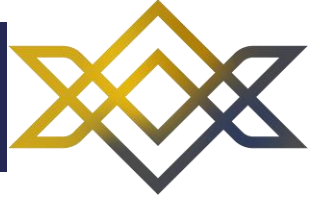
- Assess the **overall efficiency and effectiveness** of the organisation in fulfilling its vision and mission and **make recommendations** that will add to the success and value of the organisation.
- Provide the Gender Links Board and management with an impartial assessment of the organisation highlighting **some of the key strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats** which will inform the organisation's future strategic planning processes.
- **Devise an action plan for strengthening GL institutionally** based on the findings.

Output

A prioritised action plan to assist Gender Links in becoming a centre of excellence for Gender Integration services in Africa.

*The Gates Foundation provided the funding for the organisational effectiveness assessment

In addition to the broader mandate of conducting an organisational assessment of Gender Links, two specific areas of interest were noted for the engagement



Sustainability

- **Context:** GL services is one of the for-profit initiatives that the organisation has in place to foster sustainability. Under this portfolio, GL offers a range of services, including (i) advisory/consultancy support, (ii) grant management, (iii) research, and (iv) publications.
- Declining donor funding and increased competition have highlighted the need for NGOs and other development actors to leverage alternative funding approaches to foster sustainability. Recent events such as the USAID funding freeze and the Dutch Government's plan to eliminate all funding for gender-equality programmes have heightened these concerns.
- GL Services provides a strong opportunity for Gender Links to build additional resilience in the market. Given this, assessing the extent to which the organisation has the **capacity to deliver the GL Services at scale** is important.



Governance

- **Context:** In 2024, Gender Links implemented a decentralised governance model by establishing three country boards to oversee operations in Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Lesotho respectively. The intent was to encourage country offices to be self-sufficient and independent from the regional hub.
- The Executive Leadership of Gender Links expressed **interest in assessing the effectiveness of the decentralised model** and country boards.

As a first step in conducting the review, an organisational effectiveness assessment framework was developed, drawing from GL's existing practices



Strategic Positioning	Governance and Leadership	Programme of Action	Results for Change	Institutional Effectiveness	Sustainability
Clarity of Vision and Mission	GL Association	Programmes /Interventions: Prioritisation	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Organisational Structure	Funding Model
Clarity of Shared Values and Culture	Regional Board	Partnerships: The Alliance and NGOs	Knowledge Management	Human Resource Planning	Fundraising: GL Future Fund
Clarity on Impact and Performance Values	Country Boards	Partnerships: Donors	Reporting and Documentation	Succession Planning	Enterprise: Gender Advisory Services
Clarity of Strategy (Planning for Implementation)	Regional/Country Directors: Setting Directions	Partnerships: Local Governments	Innovation	People: Staffing Skills and Capacity Building	Enterprise: Grant Management
	Regional/Country Directors: Managing People	Partnerships: WOSSO Fellows	Value for Money Orientation	People: Staffing Levels and Agility	Enterprise: GL Cottages
	Decision-making Framework	Target Group Focus		IT and Communications	Fundraising: Other
	Policies and Practices (Work Methods)			Financial Management	Environmental Sustainability
	Statutory Requirements				

Note: The GL services and decentralised governance structure interest areas are covered under the “Enterprise” and “Country Boards” sub-components

Sources: GL Score Board, Gender Links 2020-25 Strategy

To gain deep insights, Axum held consultations with a wide range of internal and external GL stakeholders, disseminated surveys, and reviewed relevant documents



Research methods	Activities conducted
Field visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visited four GL locations: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Mauritius
Interviews*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewed ~30 internal stakeholders across the regional hub and country offices, including members of the Association, regional board, country boards, executive leadership, country directors, as well as senior and junior staff Interviewed ~20 key external stakeholders, including donors, local governments, program beneficiaries, and WOSSO fellows
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminated tailored surveys and received insights from 31 internal survey respondents across all staffing levels
Direct observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observed work in action including, (i) WOSSO presentations at the British High Commission, (ii) The African Women in Dialogue Meeting (iii) an Association meeting, (iv) beneficiary presentations at the Lesotho board meeting, and (v) operations at the Safe Haven shelter in Mauritius
Documents reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed key Gender Links documents including, the 2021-2025 GL strategy, the GL organisational scorecard, and various documents relating to country operations

*Note: the full list of the internal and external stakeholders interviewed can be found in the annex

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Assessment Approach | Leveraging an assessment criteria, the insights derived from the qualitative and quantitative research tools informed ratings across the framework



Organisational assessment criteria

A high-level assessment criteria was devised to serve as a guide in surfacing insights on the challenges and strengths across the various framework sub-components. It was not intended for rigid application.

	Weak capacity	Fair capacity	Solid capacity	Strong capacity
Clarity of Vision and Mission	The organisation lacks a vision and mission statement that articulates its purpose, goals, values, and direction.	The organisation has a vision and mission statement, but they are unclear.	The organisation has a clear vision and mission statement, but they are not fully integrated into its operations.	The organisation has a clear vision and mission statement that are fully integrated into its operations.
Clarity of Shared Values and Culture	The association does not have a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, and it does not engage in what happens at the organisation.	The association meets as needed but hears reports on organisational management late or is excessively involved in the functions of the regional board.	The association meets regularly and has useful guidance on the organization's strategy but sometimes involves itself in the functions of the regional board.	The association helps guide the organization's strategy and provides insight and expertise when needed by the regional board.
Clarity of Impact and Performance Values	The regional board does not have a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, and it does not engage in what happens at the organisation.	The regional board meets regularly but mainly hears reports from the organization's executive management or is excessively involved in major management decisions.	The regional board meets regularly and has useful guidance on the organization's strategy but sometimes involves itself in executive management functions.	The regional board helps guide the organization's strategy and provides insight and expertise when needed by the executive management, but also fully allows the executive management to manage.
Clarity of Strategy (Planning for Implementation)	The country board does not have a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, and it does not engage in what happens in their country offices or coordinates with the regional activities.	The country board meets regularly but mainly hears reports from the country director, or is excessively involved and must approve all major country decisions.	The country board follows its demarcation of roles responsibilities, meets regularly, and has useful guidance on the country's strategy, but sometimes involves itself in the country director's functions.	The country board helps guide the organization's strategy in line with regional and country priorities, and provides expertise when needed by the country director, but also fully allows them to manage.

Sources

Qualitative and quantitative insights were synthesized:

Analysed Survey Results

Consolidated Stakeholder Insights

Observation Notes

Document Review

Final Assessment

Based on the findings, one of the following ratings were assigned to each framework sub-component:

Strong: Highly effective, best-practice level

Solid: Well-functioning but room for improvement

Fair: Some structure in place but inconsistent execution

Weak: Significant gaps, major inefficiencies

To derive the final assessment ratings, an objective comparison of the facts was undertaken for each sub-component. It is important to note that in some cases, the survey results tended to be quite positive in their ratings compared to what was heard in interviews and observed. As a result, the assigned assessment ratings were occasionally one or two levels above/below the average rating on the surveys.

High-level results | GL's strengths include its strategic positioning, governance, and programmes, while it has significant gaps in its institutional effectiveness and sustainability efforts



Strategic Positioning	Governance and Leadership	Programme of Action	Results for Change	Institutional Effectiveness	Sustainability
Clarity of Vision and Mission	GL Association	Programmes /Interventions: Prioritization	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Organisational Structure	Funding Model
Clarity of Shared Values and Culture	Regional Board	Partnerships: The Alliance and NGOs	Knowledge Management	Human Resource Planning	Fundraising: GL Future Fund
Clarity on Impact and Performance Values	Country Boards	Partnerships: Donors	Reporting and Documentation	Succession Planning	Enterprise: Advisory Services
Clarity of Strategy (Planning for Implementation)	Directors: Setting Directions	Partnerships: Local Governments	Innovation	People: Staffing Skills and Capacity Building	Enterprise: Grant Management
	Directors: Managing People	Target Group Focus	Value for Money Orientation	People: Staffing Levels and Agility	Enterprise: GL Cottages
	Decision-making Framework	WOSSO Fellows Program		IT and Communications	Fundraising: Other
	Policies and Practices (Work Methods)			Financial Management	Environmental Sustainability
	Statutory Requirements				

Weak capacity

Fair capacity

Solid capacity

Strong capacity

Strategic Positioning | GL has a strong understanding of its mandate, values, and strategic priorities, however a few gaps were identified



Assessment summary

GL’s strategic positioning is widely recognized, with most staff affirming the clarity of GL’s vision, mission, values, and strategy. Strengths include a well-understood mandate (even among donors), an inclusive culture that fosters teamwork and purpose, and a decentralised strategy development approach that enables contextualised implementation. However, challenges remain in aligning long-term strategy development with shifting funder priorities and integrating work-life balance as part of the organisational culture.

Clarity of Vision and Mission		GL’s vision and mission statements are well-internalised and recognised as relevant by both staff and external partners (e.g., donors), however, there is concern that its scope may be too broad.
Clarity of Shared Values		GL fosters an inclusive and cohesive culture that values diversity, teamwork, and hard work, but there is an opportunity to further integrate work-life balance and staff well-being as core organisational values.
Clarity of Impact and Performance Values		Impact is central to GL’s strategic planning and staff understand how their performance contributes towards the achievement of organisational objectives.
Clarity of Strategy		While GL has a clear regional strategy that supports localised planning, aligning its planning with evolving donor priorities is a challenge.

STRENGTHS

- Clear mandate that is widely understood by staff, and at the same time resonates with regional partners and donors.
- Inclusive organisational culture that promotes shared values of teamwork, hard work, and purpose.
- Decentralised strategy development approach which fosters contextualized implementation.
- Clarity on impact and performance values.

WEAKNESSES

- Difficulty aligning long-term strategy execution with shifting funder priorities.
- Insufficient emphasis on work-life balance as an organisational value, increasing the risk of burnout.

Strategic Positioning | GL has a strong mandate and encourages decentralised planning, however aligning its strategy development with evolving funder priorities is sometimes difficult



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Clarity of Vision and Mission	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL's vision and mandate are internalised across all staff levels External partners, such as donors, also believe that GL's mission and vision statements are clear and relevant Over time, GL has adapted to respond to intersectional gender inclusion needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the vision and mission statements are widely understood, there are some concerns that the scope of activities that GL has pursued is too broad and veers away from them 	<p>Strong 46%</p> <p>Solid 23%</p> <p>Fair 31%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p>"[GL]'s strength is their firmness on gender empowerment" - Donor</p> <p>"GL may need a slimmer realm of focus on a few key areas true to its vision and mission. For long term sustainability you need to be a bit focused and not go after everything" - Internal stakeholder</p> <p>"They have expanded their areas of focus and work they do but they are not done enough to deepen their work" - Internal stakeholder</p>
Clarity of Strategy (Planning for Implementation)	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has a clear regional strategy The encouragement provided to country offices to use the regional strategy as a loose guide in developing localised plans has greatly contributed to the effectiveness of country operations, as it has enabled the teams to deliver relevant programmes/activities The recent directive requiring country offices to develop annual strategies has received support from staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning GL's strategy development efforts with evolving donor priorities has been challenging. Resultantly, donor funding occasionally influences strategy execution 	<p>Strong 42%</p> <p>Solid 23%</p> <p>Fair 35%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p>"The overall strategy is clear, but some pieces are less applicable to the local context, so it is good that from this year the countries will be developing their own strategies" - GL staff</p> <p>"One of the challenges for NGOs is constantly shifting donor priorities. Having a strategy is one thing, being able to fund all mandates regionally is another" - GL staff</p>

Strategic Positioning | GL effectively promotes an inclusive culture and successfully integrates impact values in its operations; however, it could promote work-life balance as a core value



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Clarity of Shared Values and Culture	Fair - Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL fosters an inclusive and widely embraced culture that celebrates diversity, teamwork, and hard work, enhancing organisational cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Gender Links promotes a strong work ethic, there is an opportunity to more explicitly integrate work-life balance as a core organisational value There is a need to promote a culture of well-being to support staff, which has been noted by external partners 	<p>Strong 44%</p> <p>Solid 28%</p> <p>Fair 16%</p> <p>Weak 12%</p>	<p><i>“Gender Links’ culture promotes teamwork and team spirit [where staff] see themselves as a family” – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>“We have a shared culture of teamwork and everyone is encouraged to work hard, however this can have an effect on our work-life balance” – GL staff</i></p>
Clarity on Impact and Performance Values	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact is at the core of GL’s strategic planning GL staff are aware of how their performance contributes to the realization of the organisation’s objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Insights not gathered] 	<p>Strong 58%</p> <p>Solid 0%</p> <p>Fair 38%</p> <p>Weak 4%</p>	N/A

Governance and Leadership | GL has a strong governance board with clear decision-making frameworks and policies, but decision-making powers could be clarified at some levels



Assessment summary

GL has an involved leadership that provides sufficient guidance while enabling others to manage especially at the board level e.g., 67% and 60% of staff thought regional and country boards respectively provide strong leadership. While staff believe GL's Country Directors provide clear guidance, 46% believe there is room for more attentiveness and consistent coaching to be given the teams. Overall, GL has well-documented policies, is legally compliant, and has a clear decision-making framework. However, decision-making power could be clarified at the association level.

Gender Links Association		The Association has experienced members who provide valuable guidance when consulted, although its decision-making powers need to be clarified.	Managing People		While Country Directors offer guidance and follow-up on work delivery, inconsistencies in coaching and mentorship lead to varied staff experiences, highlighting the need for more structured and equitable support.
Regional Board		The regional board provides strategic guidance to GL and adequately resolves any rising challenges. More engagement with the Association could strengthen its leadership.	Decision Making Framework		GL's multi-governance system ensures informed and inclusive decision-making at all levels. However, unclear delineation of roles between the Association and the Regional Board is a challenge.
Country Boards		While still new, the country boards demonstrate strong local context understanding and support to the country offices. However, they could leverage their networks to strengthen country fundraising and partnership efforts.	Policies and Practices		GL has strong, well-documented policies and effective systems. However, there is a need for streamlined HR and finance management systems and stronger feedback mechanisms.
Setting Directions		Country Directors provide clear direction and regularly align with staff and leadership, but there is an opportunity to improve consistency in guidance through more frequent and structured engagement.	Statutory Requirements		GL mostly has a good understanding of its legal requirements and has processes in place to ensure compliance, however, it can build a better understanding of its VAT requirements.

STRENGTHS

- Active regional and country boards that set organisational direction, provide appropriate guidance, and solve problems adequately.
- A mostly clear and inclusive decision-making framework, particularly at the board and country levels.
- Well-documented and functional policies and frameworks for governance and operations.

WEAKNESSES

- Unclear delineation of decision-making authority and roles between the GL Association and Regional Board.
- Past misalignment between HQ and certain country boards may highlight a need for clearer governance and accountability structures to ensure cohesion.
- Inconsistent staff support and guidance from regional/country directors, leading to unequal staff experiences and affecting work delivery.

Governance and Leadership | GL's boards provide strong governance; however the Association could be engaged more, and its decision-making powers could be clarified



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Gender Links Association	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Association members have relevant experience and are believed to provide useful guidance when consulted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Association's functions and decision-making powers vis-a-vis the board could be clarified The Association is sometimes engaged late on operational challenges hindering its ability to provide timely advice 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>83%</div> </div> <div> <div>Solid</div> <div>0%</div> </div> <div> <div>Fair</div> <div>0%</div> </div> <div> <div>Weak</div> <div>17%</div> </div>	<p><i>"The Association is not hands on but steps in effectively when needed" – Internal stakeholder</i></p> <p><i>"The association looks at the decisions of the board and makes suggestions, however they don't have veto powers... if the association sits above the board, there must be powers given to them" – Internal stakeholder</i></p>
Regional Board	Strong - Highly effective, best-practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regional Board adequately provides guidance on GL's direction, operations, and effectively resolves arising challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The regional board could coordinate and interact more with the Association 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>67%</div> </div> <div> <div>Solid</div> <div>25%</div> </div> <div> <div>Weak</div> <div>8%</div> </div>	<p><i>"The [regional board] operates at the right level strategically and has deployed an executive director for day to day as well as public officers who perform key operational functions" – Internal stakeholder</i></p>
Country Boards	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In their short tenure, the country boards have demonstrated a strong understanding of local contexts and have provided adequate support to the country teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country board members can leverage their networks to support local fundraising and partnership efforts Past misalignment between HQ and certain country boards (e.g. Mozambique) highlight a need for clearer governance and accountability structures to ensure cohesion 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>60%</div> </div> <div> <div>Solid</div> <div>10%</div> </div> <div> <div>Fair</div> <div>10%</div> </div> <div> <div>Weak</div> <div>10%</div> </div> <div> <div>I don't Know</div> <div>10%</div> </div>	<p><i>"This is rather a new area to assess but so far, the board seems to be operating at the right level" – Internal stakeholder</i></p>

Governance and Leadership | While GL's country leaders provide clear strategic direction, they could provide more attentiveness and mentorship to teams for efficient delivery



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Regional/ Country Directors: Setting Directions	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country Directors set the tone for work and provide clear direction based on local context Country Directors have regular touchpoints/meetings with country staff to align on scheduled work and progress to date Country offices hold monthly meetings with GL's executive leadership to further align on the direction of operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As 23% of internal survey respondents rated direction setting as fair/weak, there may be opportunities to define the frequency of meetings between staff and regional/country directors to harmonize practices across GL locations 	<p>Strong 46%</p> <p>Solid 31%</p> <p>Fair 15%</p> <p>Weak 8%</p>	N/A
Regional/ Country Directors: Managing people	Fair - Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country Directors generally provide clear guidance to their teams and follow up to ensure work delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching and mentorship support is unevenly implemented across GL resulting in diverse experiences amongst staff As staff members often carry out multiple functions and activities simultaneously, there are opportunities to provide more coaching to assist staff with work navigation and quality 	<p>Strong 15%</p> <p>Solid 23%</p> <p>Fair 46%</p> <p>Weak 15%</p>	<p><i>"Team leadership and mentorship seem to be passed on, and junior members are encouraged to make decisions and take the lead over time" – Donor</i></p> <p><i>"There is limited oversight" – Donor</i></p>

Governance and Leadership | Gender Links has well-documented policies and a relatively good decision-making framework, but more can be done to improve systems



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Decision-making framework	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender Links has a multi-level governance system that allows for diverse perspectives for decision-makingDecisions are largely informed by relevant analysis and informationDecision-making at the regional and country levels is seen as effective and efficientSome staff noted that their voices are heard and valued in decision-making discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">While there are structures in place for governance, the decision-making authority at the Association level could be clarified	<div><div>Strong</div><div>Solid</div><div>Fair</div><div>Weak</div><div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div>57%</div><div>17%</div><div>26%</div><div>0%</div></div></div>	<p><i>“Regional and country decisions are quick and there is always room for discussions” - GL staff</i></p>
Policies and Practices (Work Methods)	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The regional hub has strong and well-documented policies that cover most activities/issue areas, which are updated over timeGL’s policies are easily adopted by country officesGL generally has good templates, controls, and systems in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The absence of an integrated HR and finance platform that provides similar functions found on Pastel and Orange, has created major administration inefficienciesToo much time is spent trying to manually harmonize information across the two platforms; which could be directed elsewhereSome staff members expressed that there is a need to strengthen feedback and change management systems to solve issues raised by staff in a more effective and timely way	<div><div>Strong</div><div>Solid</div><div>Fair</div><div>Weak</div><div><div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div><div>64%</div><div>20%</div><div>8%</div><div>8%</div></div></div>	<p><i>“GL’s strength has always stemmed from its strong policies. GL has been very good at documenting its policies, revisiting and improving on them” ~ Internal stakeholder</i></p> <p><i>“The regional board has a policy for everything and its easy for the country boards to adapt to that and ensure they are in sync” – Internal stakeholder</i></p> <p><i>“GL generally has good systems but there is sometimes a reluctance to change processes and take on feedback for change management“ - GL staff</i></p>

Governance and Leadership | Gender Links is mostly compliant with its country and regional statutory requirements though there are some areas to improve

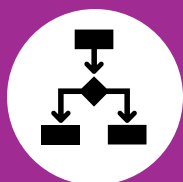


	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)		Interview insights
Statutory Requirements	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Links largely understands its legal requirements at the regional and country levels and has systems in place to ensure compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Links teams admit they have struggled in some areas, such as VAT compliance 	<div>Strong</div> <div>Solid</div> <div>Fair</div> <div>Weak</div>	<div>30%</div> <div>40%</div> <div>30%</div> <div>0%</div>	<p>“GL adheres to statutory requirements at regional and country levels” ~ GL staff</p> <p>“Gender Links always makes sure to get legal advice on matters that have legal implications” ~ GL staff</p> <p>“We have struggled in a few areas, e.g. VAT, and need to improve” ~ GL staff</p>

Recommendations| GL should restructure governance to clarify decision-making and implement a structured leadership accountability framework to strengthen staff engagement



Opportunities



Governance review
and restructuring



Performance-Based
Leadership
Accountability
Framework

Overview

While GL has a strong and inclusive governance framework, **unclear decision-making authority at some levels creates inefficiencies**. To refine governance without disrupting its strengths, **GL should implement a governance refinement strategy that enhances clarity**, while maintaining strategic alignment. Key actions can include:

- **Refine the function/role between the Association and regional board** and provide clarity on the nature of the relationship and powers assigned to each
- **Review the decision-making matrix and define which governance body has final decision-making power** over key strategic and operational matters
- **Introduce an annual governance review process**, assessing decision-making efficiency, power distribution, and role clarity at all levels

GL should introduce a **structured leadership accountability framework** that ensures **country and regional directors are actively engaged in staff development, coaching, and performance management** beyond just providing guidance. This framework can include:

- **Regular 360- Degree Feedback mechanism:** Implement a system where staff provide anonymous feedback on leadership support, mentorship, and engagement, ensuring senior leadership is held accountable for their management approach
- **Leadership KPIs:** Integrate staff engagement and mentorship as key performance KPIs in directors' evaluations to ensure their success is also measured by team engagement and development
- **Structured check-ins:** Enforce a policy where directors schedule regular check-ins with staff on their professional development, ensuring regular dialogue, feedback, coaching, and problem solving

Programs of Action | GL successfully aligns its programmes with local contexts and partners, however it could diversify its donor engagement and strengthen its support to WOSSO fellows



Assessment summary

GL successfully aligns its programmes to local context and partner priorities (e.g. donors, governments), leading to tangible impact. Most survey respondents agreed that GL's programme prioritisation, partnership with donors and local governments, and WOSSO programme are strong/solid. There are opportunities for GL to further strengthen its programme prioritisation approach and improve its engagement with the SADC Protocol Alliance. In addition, GL could conduct a thorough mapping of the donor landscape and provide more structured post-programme support for fellows.

Programme Prioritisation	GL's programmes are well aligned with local contexts and regional needs. However, GL lacks a formal programme prioritisation framework, and the variation of programmes across countries may have branding implications.	Partnerships – Local Government	GL effectively aligns its programs with local government priorities, fostering ownership and sustainability, but expanding geographic coverage in certain countries could enhance program impact.
Partnerships - Donors	GL has a track record of attracting and maintaining strong donor relationships. However, its reliance on a few donors and limited internal knowledge of gender-focused funders pose risks to long-term sustainability.	Partnerships – WOSSO	WOSSO provides valuable learning experiences for the fellows. Although ample support is given to fellows, more structured post-program support would improve sustainability.
Partnerships – Alliance and NGOs	While the Alliance provides valuable regional networks for collaboration, inconsistent engagement, and varying commitment levels among members limits opportunities for knowledge sharing.	Target Groups	Gender Links has a strong understanding of its beneficiaries, integrating them in its planning and adequately engaging them during program implementation.

STRENGTHS

- Localised programs that are aligned with on-ground needs and yield tangible impact.
- Established and collaborative relationships with donors and local governments.
- Comprehensive mentorship and training support to fellows, enhancing their ability to contribute to gender advocacy work on the continent.

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of a structured program prioritisation approach.
- Dependence on a limited pool of donors poses financial sustainability risks.
- Inconsistent engagement with the Alliance limits opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Programme of Action | GL's programmes are well-aligned with local needs and donor priorities, but strengthening donor diversity would enhance long-term impact



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Prioritisation of Programmes	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL's programmes are well aligned with local context and regional needs. This is enabled by the decentralised model, which champions tailored programme development. E.g. Safe Haven shelter in Mauritius External partners recognise the tangible and meaningful impact that GL programmes have had on target communities GL has expanded its programme focus over time to reflect the interconnectedness of gender issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL does not have a programme prioritisation framework Donors have noted that the high degree of variation in the number and nature of programmes across countries could impact GL's branding. There is a need to increase communication relating to differing country contexts and gender priority areas to minimize reputational issues 	<p>Strong 21%</p> <p>Solid 50%</p> <p>Fair 13%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p><i>"The programmes have tangible impact, in terms of women empowered in local government positions compared to when we started out" – staff</i></p> <p><i>"The reputation of Gender Links' programmes across countries is not even in terms of the structure of programme, what they do and fund. They could try to have a balance" – Donor</i></p>
Partnerships – Donors	Solid - Well-functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has a strong track record of attracting donors and maintaining good relationships at the regional and country level GL successfully aligns its priorities with country and donor priorities, enabling the organisation to secure multi-term contracts and sustain long-term partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL is overly reliant on a few donors and is not diverse in the type of funders it seeks out which poses a risk (particularly at the country-level) There is limited internal knowledge of the various gender-focused funders in the donor ecosystem 	<p>Strong 55%</p> <p>Solid 27%</p> <p>Fair 9%</p> <p>Weak 9%</p>	<p><i>"The need to diversify their donor pool. We have a limited budget each year and our focus is changing" - Donor</i></p>
Partnerships – Alliance and NGOs	Fair – Some structure in place, but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Alliance provides a strong network of gender-based organisations in the region that enables collective participation and advocacy in the region GL has effectively collaborated with Alliance members on programmes and advisory engagement in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with the Alliance is often intermittent, which impedes opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. This is partly due to varying commitment levels among the members In some GL locations, engagement with the Alliance is inactive 	<p>Strong 14%</p> <p>Solid 71%</p> <p>Fair 14%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p><i>"GL is well connected to the region [thanks to] the GL Alliance which allows them to stay up to date and [ensure] their work is imbedded in evidence and research" – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>"The Alliance is not active at the moment" – GL staff</i></p>

Programme of Action| GL's local government and WOSSO programmes are well-defined and impactful, however, there is opportunity to increase engagement with the Alliance



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)		Interview insights
Partnerships – Local Government	Strong - Highly effective, best-practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">GL effectively aligns its programming with local government priorities and needsIn Zimbabwe and Lesotho, GL’s partnerships with local governments are highly effective in that they encourage programme ownership and foster sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">GL could increase the geographic coverage of their local government programmes in some countries to expand programme impact (e.g., in Lesotho)	Strong	<div><div></div></div> 45%	<i>“The local governments feel that they can carry on the programme even if GL pulls out” - GL Staff</i>
				Solid	<div><div></div></div> 45%	
				Fair	0%	<i>“For some local government programmes, funding is not enough, and we have had to discontinue some aspects” - GL Staff</i>
				Weak	<div><div></div></div> 5%	
Partnerships – WOSSO	Solid – Well functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">WOSSO provides a strong learning opportunity for the fellows to gain first-hand experience in programme managementThe GL team is highly committed to its fellows and has cultivated a strong bond/sisterhood amongst the cohortGL’s support to fellows (i.e. mentorship, training, networking, and funding) is assessed as useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none">There is a lack of structured post-programme support to help fellows sustain their advocacy efforts, raising concerns about long-term sustainabilitySome implementation gaps were observed, including delayed fund disbursements and overpacked programs that hinder the ability of fellows to meaningfully engage	Strong	<div><div></div></div> 50%	<i>“One of the strengths of WOSSO is the ability to get fellows into events and providing the platform for us to engage and not just be spectators” – Fellow</i>
				Solid	<div><div></div></div> 50%	
				Fair	0%	<i>“The GL team is committed and they bring in a much needed Sub-Saharan perspective leveraging their networks to mentor fellows” - External stakeholder</i>
				Weak	0%	
Target Group Focus	Strong - Highly effective, best-practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">GL has a strong understanding of its programmes’ target beneficiaries and engages them in its program delivery, which ensures impactAn example of strong target group consideration is the Safe Haven shelter, which provides transformational empowerment support to female victims of abuse	N/A	Strong	<div><div></div></div> 50%	
				Solid	<div><div></div></div> 39%	
				Fair	<div><div></div></div> 11%	
				Weak	0%	

Recommendations| GL should conduct an in-depth donor mapping exercise to expand the number and type of funders sought out for programmes (1/2)



Opportunity



Expand donor engagement

Overview

GL should **strengthen donor engagement by implementing a targeted donor mapping and engagement strategy** to enhance financial sustainability and reduce reliance on a limited pool of funders. Key actions can include:

- **Conduct a donor mapping exercise** to identify new gender-focused funders, private sector partners, and philanthropic donors aligned with GL's mission
- **Leverage its networks** including the Alliance, the Association, board members, and existing partners **to facilitate introductions and engagement with potential donors**
- **Build strategic alliances with other organisations** in the gender space **to explore co-funding and joint proposal opportunities**
- **Hire experienced personnel to support business development/fundraising** efforts or identify internal staff that can solely spend time on pipeline development

Recommendations| GL should conduct an in-depth donor mapping exercise to expand the number and type of funders sought out for programmes (2/2)



Illustrative examples of donor mapping activities*



*Note: high-level donor mappings for the Zimbabwe and Mauritius offices are included in the annex

Results for Change | Despite having established systems and tools for data collection and donor reporting, inconsistent execution and capacity gaps weaken efforts



Assessment summary

Gender Links has an established monitoring and evaluation system that facilitates donor reporting. However, there is room to diversify data collection and dissemination tools to adequately capture impact indicators and stories. While GL mostly meets donor requirements, inconsistencies in reporting quality and financial accuracy highlight the need for stronger internal checks. Further, strengthening data analysis, storytelling, and internal learning mechanisms can enhance GL's ability to adequately share its impact.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning		While GL has established M&E systems and tools for data collection, execution is inconsistent due to capacity constraints and limited training.
Knowledge Management		GL has an internal knowledge sharing platform, but inconsistent document uploads, restricted access, and suboptimal data analysis limit effective learning.
Reporting and Documentation		GL largely meets donor reporting requirements and maintains a good reporting cadence. However, there are inconsistencies in quality, financial accuracy, and impact-reporting depth.
Innovation		GL uses diverse data collection tools but can enhance accessibility by incorporating more visually engaging formats such as infographics, videos, and interactive reports.
Value for Money		GL maintains strong financial transparency and resource tracking ensuring best-practice financial management.

STRENGTHS

- Established M&E processes, templates, and diverse data collection tools that capture key program information.
- Ability to meet basic donor reporting requirements and successfully navigate different asks, however complex.
- Strong processes for tracking resources and financial reporting, ensuring accountability and value for money.

WEAKNESSES

- Suboptimal data analysis, knowledge sharing, and impact reporting mechanisms, where the impact of programmes is often underreported/ not fully captured.
- Inconsistencies and mistakes in donor reporting highlight a need for stronger internal checks.

Results for Change | There is need for Gender Links to strengthen its MEL capacity/systems and analysis to enhance donor reporting and knowledge sharing



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Fair - Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Links has an established M&E system and templates that support to streamline data collection and progress tracking The MEL team has rolled out tools that enable qualitative information (i.e. pictures and stories) to be collected Generally, the M&E system captures most donor reporting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The M&E team is too small to sufficiently serve the regional hub and lend support to country offices Staff often fail to earmark appropriate portions of program budgets towards M&E activities There is a need to adopt a longitudinal approach to track impact over time to cater to shifting donor interests The M&E team would benefit from regular training to keep abreast with new trends and tools More training and data validation is required to assist external partners and beneficiaries with data collection In addition, the MEL tools could be modified to improve user experiences 	<p>Strong 50%</p> <p>Solid 35%</p> <p>Fair 10%</p> <p>Don't know 5%</p>	<p><i>“Only 2% of project budgets are often allocated to M&E but it comprises a lot of the day-to-day work” – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>“GL need to do more field visits to verify data as the local authorities can falsify the numbers” – Local government</i></p>
Reporting and Documentation	Fair - Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the most part, GL meets donor reporting requirements, while successfully adjusting to different donor templates and requests, however complex GL has a frequent reporting cadence with grantees and on-ground partners which enables them to collect data in time to go into their donor reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While GL largely fulfils donor reporting obligations, occasional errors or gaps in reports indicate a need for stronger internal quality control mechanisms to ensure accuracy and consistency Although donor reports capture key programme activities and outputs, they do not always fully reflect the depth of impact observed by donors and partners in the field. Donors have highlighted that they want to hear more stories to better understand the impact of their funding Financial reporting has been a challenge as donors often find errors in the reports, highlighting a need for further capacity-building There are inconsistencies in meeting reporting deadlines 	<p>Strong 67%</p> <p>Solid 28%</p> <p>Don't know 6%</p>	<p><i>“When we go on the field, we are able to see a lot of impact that is not captured in our donor reports” - Donor</i></p> <p><i>“Some errors were found in the reports” - Donor</i></p>

*Note: while the internal survey results were positive, the qualitative insights gathered were concerning enough to justify bringing the rating down

Results for Change| GL could build on its existing efforts to strengthen its knowledge management practices and invigorate its impact reporting mechanisms and tools



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Knowledge Management	Fair – some structures in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has a shared intranet platform and OneDrive where some documents are stored There are ongoing efforts to improve coordination between departments (e.g. the M&E team and grant-making unit) to ensure effective knowledge-sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are challenges converting data into knowledge products. Enhancing data analysis capabilities and writing would enable deeper insights to be generated that can improve program learning Documents are not regularly uploaded to the intranet/OneDrive platform, which hinders internal knowledge cultivation. E.g., all past proposals and reports are not on the platforms Some staff members reported having restricted access to OneDrive There are minimal learning sessions between country officers 	<p>Strong 44%</p> <p>Solid 33%</p> <p>Fair 17%</p> <p>Weak 6%</p>	<p>“Data could be presented country-wise. A dashboard of all the work we have been doing so we do not have to rely on HQ to provide these data.” ~ GL staff</p> <p>“The country offices don’t always have access to the shared OneDrive with all the proposals” – GL staff</p>
Innovation	Fair – some structures in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The M&E team uses diverse tools to aid qualitative and quantitative data collection, such as Alchemer, Looker Studio, Good Grants, Piwigo, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity for GL to diversify its reporting formats, incorporating more visually engaging content (e.g., infographics, videos, and interactive reports) to enhance accessibility 	<p>Strong 39%</p> <p>Solid 39%</p> <p>Fair 22%</p>	
Value for Money	Strong – Highly effective, best practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has transparent processes for tracking resources and financial reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p>Strong 56%</p> <p>Solid 33%</p> <p>Fair 11%</p>	<p>“VFM is one of the principles applied by GL and most donors are quite pleased with GL VFM principles” ~ Survey Respondent</p>

Recommendations| GL should strengthen MEL capacity and its internal review controls, upgrade its knowledge management system, and diversify its impact reporting templates



Opportunities



Expand MEL capacity and upskilling



Strengthen internal controls for donor reporting



Upgrade knowledge management system



Diversify reporting and impact sharing formats and templates

Overview

GL should strengthen its internal MEL abilities to systematically track, validate, and report its impact. Key activities could include:

- **Increase the size of the MEL team** to support with capacity and quality of support provided to **country/regional programme teams**
- **Ensure realistic budgets are allocated to M&E across all program and service engagements**
- **Provide targeted MEL training** to programme teams on MEL systems and approaches to address knowledge gaps
- Establish a community practice group to learn about best practices

Building on its efforts, GL can **strengthen its internal review systems to improve the consistency and accuracy of donor reporting**. Key activities could include:

- **Develop a standard reporting reviewing check-list** that checks for key inputs (such as financial metrics), and make it a mandatory requirement for staff to refer to it in their reporting
- **Introduce a multiple-step validation and review process** where donor reporting is first reviewed by a MEL expert and finance personnel in addition to managers before submission

GL should **improve its accessibility and organisation of internal knowledge**, ensuring country teams can efficiently retrieve reports, proposals, and best practices. Key activities could include:

- **Upgrade and enforce the use of a centralised digital repository**, where all grant proposals, impact reports, and research documents are systematically stored and categorised. The **digital repository could include key features** such as a resource library by topic, and **data dashboards**
- **Ensure accessibility for all staff** and **conduct quarterly knowledge-sharing sessions**, where teams present insights from successful projects, MEL learnings, and donor feedback

GL should **diversify its reporting formats by integrating more visual impact storytelling approaches**. Key activities could include:

- **Develop standardised reporting templates** that integrate infographics, data visualization and case studies to make reporting more engaging.
- **Produce short video summaries** of key programs for wide dissemination

Institutional Effectiveness | Gender Links has significant gaps across most institutional effectiveness sub-components



Assessment summary

Gender Links faces significant institutional effectiveness gaps, particularly in HR planning, succession planning, staffing levels, capacity building, and external communications. Due to donor funding constraints, administrative roles—including HR—are not fully financed, leaving GL without dedicated HR personnel. While GL staff are adaptable and often take on multiple roles, they are stretched thin and lack adequate upskilling, leading to delivery challenges. Efforts to mentor some staff for succession exist but remain informal and ineffective. Additionally, GL's external communication efforts are weak and under-resourced, limiting its ability to share programme impact effectively.

Organisational Structure		Gender Links' structure facilitates cross-collaboration, but its flat hierarchy and role ambiguity limit clarity, career progression, and the inclusion of key leadership positions.	People: Staffing Levels and Agility		Although GL's staff are highly dedicated and agile, staff shortages lead to excessive workloads, affecting work-life balance, program delivery, and overall well-being.
Human Resource Planning		While GL has strong HR policies for staff oversight, the absence of an HR Manager and unclear role structures hinder workforce planning and long-term staffing efficiency.			
Succession Planning		GL has made efforts to address leadership transitions, but the lack of a structured succession plan and inconsistent mentorship weaken long-term leadership pipeline development.	IT and Communications		GL has valuable media engagement experience. However, the absence of a formal communications strategy and a dedicated Communication Manager, limits GL's ability to effectively engage stakeholders and enhance visibility.
People: Staffing Skills and Capacity Building		GL fosters an enabling environment for junior staff to take the lead in project delivery, but gaps in specialized training and skills development limit efficiency in key functions.	Financial Management		GL maintains strong and transparent financial management practices.

STRENGTHS

- A mostly functional organisational structure that supports operations.
- Robust and transparent financial management efforts with sound budgeting and accountability.

WEAKNESSES

- The absence of a dedicated HR role affects strategic workforce planning and staff support.
- While mentorship efforts exist to promote junior staff/ identify successors for exec positions, they are informal and lack structured implementation.
- Teams are stretched thin, impacting delivery efficiency and creating operational gaps.
- Most staff rely on on-the-job learning with minimal structured training or upskilling opportunities.
- The absence of a communications strategy and under resourced communication efforts limit effectiveness.

Institutional Effectiveness| GL has a flexible org. structure, but its HR planning is constrained by funding limitations and unclear roles make it difficult to identify staffing needs and gaps



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Organisational Structure	Fair – Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL's organisational structure enables cross-collaboration and interaction at all levels, both at the regional and country levels The structure within country teams is relatively clear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles and job functions require more clarity A few key roles are missing from the structure, i.e., Director of Programmes, Communications Manager, etc As the structure is relatively flat (consisting of two to four main levels depending on the department/country), some staff have observed limited career progression opportunities 	<p>Strong 46%</p> <p>Solid 33%</p> <p>Fair 13%</p> <p>Weak 8%</p>	<p><i>"GL has a well-defined structure" - GL staff</i></p> <p><i>"Personal career growth is too slow, I don't see people really rising through the organisation" – GL staff</i></p>
Human Resource Planning	Fair – Some structure in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has robust HR policies and extensively tracks staff life cycles and time management, showing its initiative to ensure operational oversight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL does not have a HR Manager, which hinders long-term workforce planning While restrictions in donor funding would prohibit one donor from bearing the full cost of operational roles (including HR), GL could explore creative ways of allocating these costs across multiple donors The lack of clearly defined roles and staff taking on multiple functions, prevents GL from effectively identifying expertise and staffing gaps 	<p>Strong 38%</p> <p>Solid 29%</p> <p>Fair 24%</p> <p>Weak 10%</p>	<p><i>"This is challenging because of constantly shifting funding. We can only contract one year at a time. We have had to adopt very flexible models - sometimes good, sometimes challenging" – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>"We don't have funding to fund a 100% HR role which affects our HR planning" – GL staff</i></p>

Institutional Effectiveness | There are significant inefficiencies in GL's succession planning, staff skills development and staff allocation leading to workload strain



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Succession Planning	Weak – Significant gaps, major inefficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has previously made attempts to find new leadership and is actively trying to solve this challenge GL has assessed and distilled key learnings from past failed succession attempts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL lacks defined succession plans across the organisation. This puts the functioning of the organisation at risk in the event of staff exits due to a lack of knowledge transfer Donors have highlighted the lack of clarity surrounding succession as a major concern Inconsistent mentorship and training for junior staff limit their readiness to assume leadership positions, weakening long-term leadership pipelines 	<p>Strong 13%</p> <p>Solid 38%</p> <p>Fair 25%</p> <p>Weak 13%</p> <p>Don't know 8%</p>	<i>“Even at our organisation we always wondered whether the success of GL is dependent on having a strong leader, and if that would be the case in her absence” – Donor</i>
People: Staffing Skills and Capacity Building	Fair – Some structure in place, but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has an enabling environment that supports junior staff taking the lead and learning on the job. For instance, country staff attested that they are given the avenue to lead donor liaison efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some staff members feel that GL could provide more support for upskilling and training on both their specific areas of focus and key systems e.g. procurement, MEL GL's multi-tasking model creates a gap in specialised staff for key functions such as fundraising, communications 	<p>Strong 44%</p> <p>Solid 33%</p> <p>Fair 17%</p> <p>Weak 6%</p>	<i>“Most training [in my role] is on the job. Capacity development or upskilling usually staff do on their own at their own time” - GL staff</i>
People: Staffing Levels and Agility	Weak – Significant gaps, major inefficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite resource constraints, GL's staff are highly dedicated and adaptable, fulfilling multiple roles and functions GL has high staff retention with an average tenure of 6-7 years, which may reflect a degree of job satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff shortages lead to excessive workload distribution, stretching teams too thin and affecting both work-life balance and program delivery Some donors expressed concern about staff well-being and worry about the sustainability of the current work practices 	<p>Strong 17%</p> <p>Solid 46%</p> <p>Fair 33%</p> <p>Weak 4%</p>	<p><i>“GL works at maximum capacity which is both impressive and risky” - Donor</i></p> <p><i>“They are spread too thin; they need to take time for themselves so that they don't burnout” – Donor</i></p>

Institutional Effectiveness | GL excels in financial management but lacks a strategic, well-resourced communication approach, limiting its ability to boost its visibility



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
IT and Communications	Weak – Significant gaps, major inefficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has a trove of rich content that can be leveraged for external communications Some of GL’s programmes have defined communication strategies (e.g. WOSSO) GL has contacts across traditional media outlets and has experience leveraging print and radio to assist with communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the organisational level, GL does not have a formal communications strategy, and existing communication efforts are executed in an ad-hoc manner GL does not have a dedicated staff member to coordinate and implement communication efforts, highlighting a critical capacity gap GL’s website is outdated and complex to navigate There is a need to leverage digital channels more to boost GL’s visibility, disseminate learnings, and reach wider audiences, including donors, target communities, governments, etc 	<p>Strong 33%</p> <p>Solid 33%</p> <p>Fair 33%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p><i>“Communication needs to be pushed. I had never heard about GL before I started working with them. They need to share more stories about their work and impact” - Donor</i></p> <p><i>“Gender Links collects a lot of data in its programs, but they don’t know how to use it or communicate it” - Donor</i></p>
Financial Management	Strong – Highly effective, best practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has strong and transparent financial management practices and seeks out opportunities to further improve them GL staff have provided support and guidance to the new CFO to aid onboarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<p>Strong 64%</p> <p>Solid 27%</p> <p>Fair 9%</p> <p>Weak 0%</p>	<p><i>“Financial management is well planned” – Internal stakeholder</i></p> <p><i>“This is indeed an area of strength in terms of the work of Gender Links. They have - I believe - perfected a model that can be emulated by others” – Internal stakeholder</i></p>

Institutional Effectiveness Recommendations | There are multiple succession scenarios that GL can adopt, which each have their own advantages and disadvantages



	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Scenario 1: A CEO that carries out all functions	One CEO that undertakes multiple key functions alone (i.e. the current scenario)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity on who the ultimate decision-maker is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite working for the current CEO (given her multiple capabilities), this approach has not been successful with any other hires Unlikely to find someone with the same skillset and passion as the current leader Limits time for strategic planning Increases the risk of burnout Disrupts operations when the CEO is absent
Scenario 2: Co-CEOs	Two CEOs leading the organisation together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complementary skillsets enable co-leaders to split the workload and undertake separate functions Creates more time for strategic planning compared to scenario one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complicated and increases the risk of disagreements and division Unclear who the ultimate decision-maker is Creates uncertainties for staff regarding whose directions to follow
Scenario 3: Multiple Directors and a CEO	Two to three technical directors (e.g. programmes, finance and fundraising, services, etc) and a CEO that coordinates them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Succession mechanisms are embedded in the structure Creates significant room for the CEO to focus on strategic planning The technical directors can play to their strengths and focus on improving performance outcomes Increases accountability Fosters work-life balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May require more resources to implement (e.g. salary costs)

Institutional Effectiveness Recommendations | There are various mechanisms for ongoing leadership development that GL can implement to support with succession



Mechanisms	Description
Leadership pipeline program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An internal talent pool is selected to undertake a structured mentorship programme• Candidates understudy the current leader to aid in knowledge transfer and the development of critical skills• Duration between 2-3 years to ensure adequate preparation for leadership
External recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular "marketplace" scans are conducted to identify people in the sector who might be suitable for future role• Search firms are engaged once senior roles need to be filled• Recruited talent are assigned a mentor and receive onboarding and capacity building support to adjust to the organisation
Internal planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement an annual planning process to forecast potential leadership vacancies, set clear timelines for transitions, and ensure proactive recruitment• Create norms that encourage people to signal in advance when they leave a role

Institutional Effectiveness Recommendations | Additional recommendations cut across human resource planning, people, and communications



Human Resource Planning

- **Recruitment:** hire an HR lead or explore outsourcing options to ensure that the function is sufficiently covered.
- **Planning:** develop a HR plan and strategy to define both a short and long-term approach to address gaps. These should cover workforce planning, talent development, succession planning, etc.
- **Systems:** invest in a platform that integrates HR and finance functions to alleviate the time spent on administration activities. One example is Odoo, which provides a suite of options that can be highly customized to the organisations' needs

People: Staffing Levels and Agility

- **Recruitment:** linked to the HR plan and strategy, review the organisational structure, and consult with staff to identify where additional capacity is needed. Examples of identified functions include communications, fundraising, and HR.
- **Planning:** ensure realistic budgets are allocated to M&E, communication, and administration activities for all programmes and service engagements to improve the quality of the support provided
- **Wellness:** develop an approach to provide mental support for staff in a bid to avoid burnout. Potential initiatives that could be explored include team bonding events to boost morale, mental health days, encouraging staff to use their annual leave days, etc.

Communications

- **Recruitment:** hire a Communications Manager to coordinate and execute awareness-building efforts. This would involve collaborations with the country, M&E, and program teams, as well as GL Services to package knowledge products and materials.
- **Planning:** craft a communications strategy to support with strengthening GL's visibility. GL's impending 25th anniversary can mark the start of strategy implementation
- **Storytelling:** linked to planning, increase the dissemination of stories that showcase how lives have been impacted by GL interventions. Develop short case studies, videos, and infographics that can be shared with different audiences

Sustainability | While Gender Links has an exemplary funding model, there are opportunities to strengthen its income generating activities i.e. GL cottages and GL Advisory Services



Assessment summary

While Gender Links has a multi-layered funding model, there are opportunities to strengthen its income-generating activities. The GL Cottages have consistently generated income, however, renovations and upgrades could improve client satisfaction and attract a broader client base. GL's Advisory Services face high demand, but the lack of structured planning and pipeline development, staffing shortages, and skilling gaps limit scalability. Established offerings such as research and media engagement are well-positioned. GL's grant management unit runs efficiently and shows promise for scalability, though staff would benefit from training on proposal writing.

Funding Model	Strong	Gender Links has a diversified and sustainable funding model, but country offices need to establish income-generating activities to strengthen financial resilience.	Enterprise – GL Advisory Services	Weak	While GL Advisory Services has established credibility in gender integration, the team size and capacity, as well as the absence of a structured growth plan hinder long-term planning and business development. Strengthening central planning, investing in up-skilling and expanding client engagement beyond traditional donors could enhance its competitiveness and sustainability.
Fundraising: GL Future Fund	Solid	The fund has grown significantly and provides a financial safety net. However inconsistent contributions from country offices and different interpretations of the uses of the fund highlight a need for greater clarity.			
Fundraising: Other	Fair	Although GL has a strong track record in resource mobilisation, the lack of a dedicated fundraising team and limited proposal-writing capacity restricts pipeline development.	Enterprise – Grant Management	Solid	The Grant Making Unit is well-structured and effectively oversees grant activities, with a dedicated team and clear role delineation. However, limited proposal-writing skills and the absence of a structured business development approach hinder its ability to secure new funding.
Enterprise – GL Cottages	Fair	While the cottages serve marginalised communities and local NGOs, outdated facilities, poor service, and infrastructure bottlenecks hinder its full potential.	Environmental Sustainability	Fair	GL promotes green initiatives but there is inconsistent enforcement limiting the effectiveness of its sustainability efforts.

STRENGTHS

- Reputable gender advisory services where GL is recognised as a credible advisor in gender mainstreaming.
- Large grant management portfolio, with an efficient team.
- GL cottages consistently generates income.

WEAKNESSES

- Over-reliance on a few key donors increases financial vulnerability in a shifting funding environment.
- Insufficient capacity and limited upskilling opportunities for advisory services, limit the work GL can take on.
- Operational inefficiencies and outdated facilities of GL cottages.

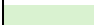
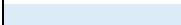


Sustainability| GL has diverse funding sources, including an endowment and income generating activities, but it could invest in strengthening its fundraising capabilities



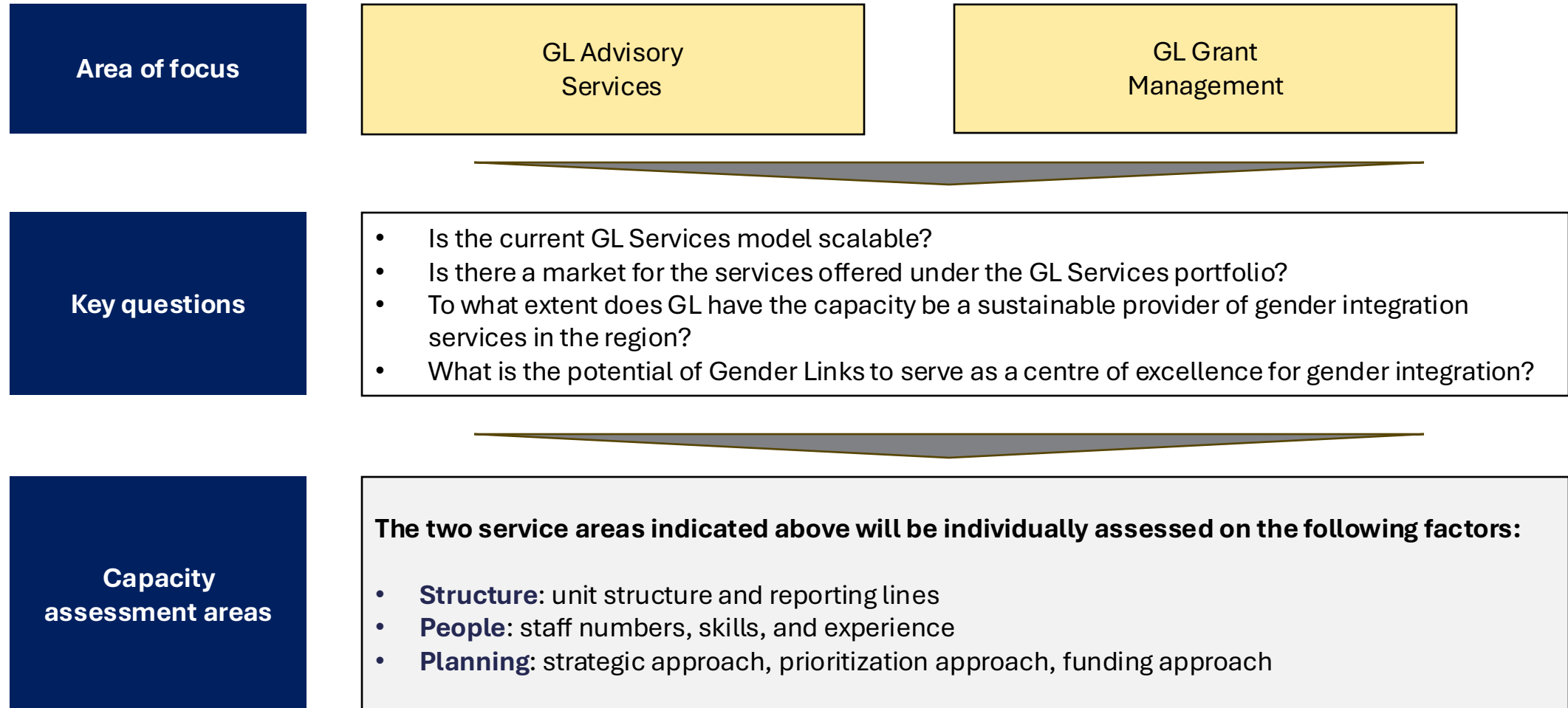
	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
Funding Model	Strong – Highly effective, best practice level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has multiple funding sources, including donor funds, an endowment, and income-generating activities, showing its commitment to financial sustainability Within the ecosystem, GL's non-traditional NGO funding model is seen as unique and a testament to its commitment to sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the regional funding model is strong, there is a need for county offices to establish income-generating activities to improve sustainability 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>Solid</div> <div>Fair</div> <div>Weak</div> <div>Don't know</div> </div> <div> <div>59%</div> <div>12%</div> <div>24%</div> <div>0%</div> <div>6%</div> </div>	<p><i>"Our funding model is garnering a lot of interest" – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>"There is a need to implement income generating operations in the country to limit overreliance on donors, as HQ has done with the Cottages" – GL staff</i></p>
GL Future Fund	Solid – Well functioning but room for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GL Fund provides a safety net for the organisation and aids in financing catalytic investments such as property The fund has achieved strong growth since its inception in 2010, rising from ZAR 7 million to ~22 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although some country offices have made contributions to the fund to support with shared services, this has not been widely and consistently adopted GL staff have varying interpretations of the goal of the Future Fund and what it can and cannot be used for; highlighting a need for further clarity 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>Solid</div> <div>Fair</div> <div>Weak</div> </div> <div> <div>33%</div> <div>67%</div> <div>0%</div> <div>0%</div> </div>	
Fundraising (Others)	Fair – some structures in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Links has a strong track record of successfully mobilising resources across some country offices and the regional hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a dearth of strong proposal writing skills within GL, which has led to one person being heavily burdened with the responsibility of producing quality proposals GL does not have a dedicated fundraising team and staff lack the skills and capacity to support pipeline development 	<div> <div>Strong</div> <div>Solid</div> <div>Fair</div> <div>Weak</div> <div>Don't know</div> </div> <div> <div>47%</div> <div>16%</div> <div>16%</div> <div>11%</div> <div>11%</div> </div>	<p><i>"We lack good proposal writing skills and so burden Colleen in doing the major lifting of proposal" – GL staff</i></p>

Sustainability| GL cottages provides an integral source of revenue, but renovations could increase its competitiveness; notably GL's environmental sustainability efforts are ad-hoc



	Assessment	Strengths	Gaps	Internal survey results (% of survey respondents)	Interview insights
GL Cottages	Weak - Significant gaps, major inefficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL Cottages provides a safe space for marginalized populations that do not feel comfortable engaging in dialogue in mainstream facilities (e.g. hotels) The conferencing facilities have been successful and have resulted in the GL Cottages breaking even or generating profit annually; demonstrating financial viability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rooms at the cottages are outdated and require renovations to improve quality standards. Examples include adjustable shower heads, new curtains/blinds, larger cooling/heating appliances, etc Cleaning practices require revisions to improve quality standards and customer comfort. Some guests observed stains on sheets and towels, insects on beds, etc There are major infrastructure challenges. While GL has made some investments in infrastructure (e.g. boreholes), the Cottages are impacted by regional water and electricity shortages. More investments are needed for the Cottages to be fully self-sufficient Further training is required to ensure each staff members have the skills to perform their role effectively. E.g. ensuring drivers have strong navigation skills The Cottages' proximity to unsafe areas, has occasionally deterred customers from lodging at the Cottages, further impacting revenue potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A – survey respondents did not directly assess GL Cottages 	<p><i>"The cottages are very tranquil, but they can upgrade them to unlock more opportunities" – GL staff</i></p> <p><i>"I have not stayed at the Cottages, but colleagues have shared that their experience staying there was negative" - Donor</i></p>
Environmental Sustainability	Fair - some structures in place but inconsistent execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL has an internal climate change policy to promote a green working environment GL teams try to implement green initiatives in their programs. E.g. encouraging the use of biodegradable materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental approaches are not always enforced. For instance, some country offices print excessive volumes of materials 	<p>Strong  20%</p> <p>Solid  40%</p> <p>Fair  40%</p> <p>Weak  0%</p>	<p><i>"The office has a green policy but in many of the communities we work in, the people don't have phones or internet, so that results in us having to print manuals that we take there" – GL staff</i></p>

Sustainability | Given the importance of understanding the potential of the GL Service portfolio, advisory services and grant management was assessed in more detail



Sustainability | GL has successfully provided a range of advisory services and has executed over 50 consultancy contracts since its founding in 2001



Snapshot of activities to date

- GL Advisory Services was established in 2001 to provide gender integration consulting services in the region while generating income for Gender Links
- GL Advisory Services' offerings include:
 - Gender audits and impact assessments
 - Policy and strategy development
 - Research
 - Strategic communications
 - Publications
 - Training
- Since its inception, GL Advisory Services has executed over 50 consultancy contracts
- In the past 5 years, GL has served a diverse range of clients including governments, mainly in the SADC region, regional actors, (such as the AU and the African Development Bank), and global development donor partners (e.g., the Gates Foundation, GIZ, UN Women)

Sustainability – GL Advisory Services | GL Advisory Services has strong credibility, however staffing and skilling gaps, and the lack of structured planning limits its efficiency and growth



	Assessment	Insights	Interview quotes and survey responses
Structure	Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GL Advisory Services operates as an independent consulting unit primarily led by two consultant associates and overseen by the Executive Director. In addition, GL engages with external experts on a project-by-project basis and occasionally gets surge capacity from other internal team members based on their expertise and availability While this structure allows for flexibility in project execution, it lacks centralized planning and coordination, limiting long-term strategic alignment The absence of a manager dedicated to overseeing GL services (including advisory), results in executive leadership balancing both execution and oversight responsibilities, creating inefficiencies 	<i>"We are a small team, but we are diverse in what we offer"</i>
People	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The advisory team is understaffed, with only two associate staff managing multiple high-stakes projects, making it challenging to meet client expectations while also engaging in business development and knowledge generation There have been instances where GL has had to turn down advisory engagements due to limited staff availability, impacting revenue generation Limited investment in structured upskilling has created knowledge gaps in key areas that are important for project delivery, such as best practices in gender integration, and proposal writing 	<i>"There is the option to bring in other consultants [including other GL staff] when needed"</i>
Planning	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While GL Advisory Services has established credibility in gender integration, its strategic direction lacks a formalized growth plan, making it difficult to proactively shape its service offerings. Pipeline management is reactive, with limited mechanisms to engage in business development. Pursuing advisory engagement beyond traditional donor partners clients (e.g., engaging with the private sector) could improve GL's competitiveness and leverage 	<i>"There isn't a pipeline development process"</i> <i>"We have managed to not need to go out and directly look for pieces of work because normally people come to us"</i>
Overall rating	Weak	Gender Links has strong credibility in gender integration, but the potential of its advisory services remains largely unrealized. While it has a flexible structure, it lacks centralised planning. In addition, teams report staffing and upskilling gaps, leading to project execution inefficiencies. Overall, strengthening GL Advisory Services' strategic planning around its service offerings and pipeline development can enhance its competitiveness and leverage	



Snapshot of activities to date

- The Gender Links Grant Making Unit has managed several major funding programmes supporting gender equality, advocacy, and social inclusion:
 - **Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) initiative:** started in 2019 with an initial funding tranche of CAD 4 million from Global Affairs Canada to manage between 2019–2023. During COVID-19, FCDO provided GBP 100,000 in supplementary funding for the initiative. In 2024, the Grant Making Unit received a second round of funding (CAD 6 million) from Global Affairs Canada for 2024–2028
 - **Voice and Choice Southern Africa Fund:** has been running since 2023, with an allocation of GBP 1.5 million from Amplify Change
 - **Morang Fund:** GL recently secured EUR 3 million for the Morang Fund (2025–2028) to support LGBTI rights in six countries
- There are two main financial mechanisms leveraged by the Grant Making Unit:
 - Management fees, ranging between 10-12%
 - Funds generated from holding funds in low-risk, interest-generating accounts

*Note: based on the March 2025 exchange rate

Sustainability – Grant Management | GL’s Grant Making Unit is well-structured and experienced, but it could strengthen its strategic planning and business development efforts



	Assessment	Insights	Quotes
Structure	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grant Making Unit operates as an independent unit within GL and consists of four core members supported by the executive leadership, the CFO, and an M&E officer Currently, the unit does not have a manager, however, the core team has demonstrated that they can effectively manage responsibilities within the unit 	<i>“We have toyed around about having a manager, but we feel comfortable without one. We were able to divide roles based on our strengths”</i>
People	Solid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender Links has a dedicated grant management team with the necessary expertise and experience to oversee and execute grant activities effectively The core team has a clear delineation of responsibilities relating to who takes on program-related work, finance, strategic initiatives, etc. However, the team possesses weak proposal-writing skills, limiting opportunities to develop a strong business development pipeline 	<i>“The additional skills we need is as a team is to be able to write good proposals without having to rely on senior leaders”</i>
Planning	Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grant Making Unit has successfully secured a second grant from Global Affairs Canada for the Women Voice and Leadership initiative, signaling donor satisfaction However, the Grant Making Unit lacks a structured approach to acquiring new clients. Investing in business development would strengthen its success 	N/A
Overall Rating	Solid	The Grant Management Unit operates with robust systems and efficient teams that ensure effective service delivery. However, there is room for improvement in its strategic planning, particularly in formalizing its service offerings and developing a structured approach to client acquisition. Further, upskilling staff on proposal writing and business development will enhance the unit’s ability to secure new fund management opportunities in the short-term	

Sustainability | Recommendations have been highlighted across three areas – GL Advisory Services, GL Cottages, and fundraising



Enterprise: GL Advisory Services

- **Planning:** establish a high-level unit plan at the start of each year to define the type of work, topics, and funders the advisory team aims to pursue based on market demand. This would enable the team to have a sense of direction, prioritise efforts, track progress, and be proactive.
- **People:** appropriately staff associates (and recruit more where necessary) to support with capacity and reduce instances of rejecting projects due to limited staff availability

Fundraising: Other

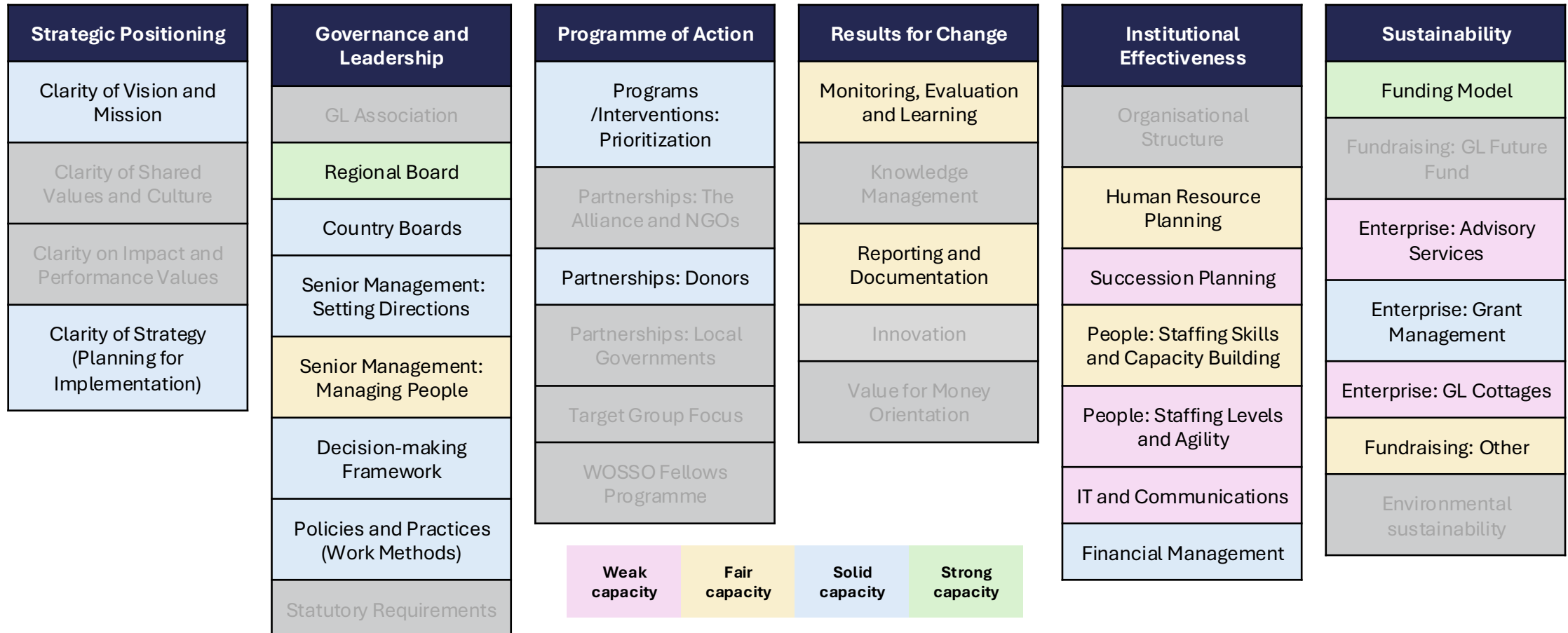
- **Capacity-building:** deliver in-depth proposal writing training to staff every quarter to improve their capabilities. The skills obtained from the training would be transferable and support in improving the quality of writing across all outputs
- **Fundraising unit:** establish a dedicated team to increase business development activities. The primary focus of the team should be to increase the number of projects under GL Services given the donor funding landscape

Enterprise: GL Cottages

- **Business case:** undertake a high-level analysis before renovating to understand the potential benefits, costs, risks, and implementation timeline
- **Renovations:** update the room to improve comfort, e.g. adjustable shower heads, curtains/blinds, larger cooling/heating appliances
- **Infrastructure:** purchase water pumps to better distribute water from boreholes across the property. Invest in solar power to reduce dependence on the national grid
- **Property management framework:** develop a framework to provide guidance on the processes and procedures required to manage the Cottages efficiently and effectively

Recommendations Summary

While all the sub-components of the framework are important, a few areas have been highlighted as being the most critical in impacting GL's effectiveness



Given the assessment findings, these sub-components were found to have the most potential to catalyse GL's effectiveness based on the following considerations:
 (i) their importance to GL's future success (ii) the extent of the gaps in performance/capabilities.
 Nonetheless, it is recognized that these critical areas interlink with other sub-components in the framework

Seven recommendations with significant potential to enhance GL's organisational effectiveness and long-term success were identified and presented in order of priority (1/4)



Recommendation	Objectives	Gaps Addressed	Key Actions/Details
1. Enhance MEL, knowledge management, and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase GL's visibility as a leader in gender advocacy and integration • Strengthen MEL capacity, knowledge management, and data analysis to improve GL's ability to track impact, enhance donor reporting, and inform strategic decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External communications: limited visibility/awareness of GL's impact, no communications strategy, and limited use of visually engaging formats for external knowledge sharing • MEL: capacity and resourcing constraints, leading to inefficiencies in data collection, validation, and analysis • Knowledge management: challenges converting data to knowledge products • Documentation and reporting: inconsistencies and mistakes in donor reporting highlighting a need for stronger internal checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire an experienced Communications Manager to coordinate and execute awareness-building efforts • Develop a communications strategy to support with strengthening GL's visibility • Recruit additional MEL capacity to assist country teams and advice on the enhancement of M&E plans, data collection methods and data management/use • Upgrade and enforce the use of a centralised digital repository, where all past documents are systematically stored and categorized. Include key features such as a resource library by topic, and data dashboards. • Develop a standard reporting reviewing check-list that checks for key inputs (such as financial metrics), and make it a mandatory requirement for staff to refer to it in their donor reporting • Introduce a multiple-step validation and review process where donor reporting is first reviewed by a MEL expert and finance personnel, in addition to managers, before submission • Develop standardised reporting templates that integrate infographics, storytelling, data visualization and case studies for different audiences
2. Establish a plan for GL Advisory Services and expand its team capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable GL to become a center of excellence for gender integration services in Africa • Unlock the potential of GL Advisory Services to strengthen financial sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing shortages, with only two associate staff managing multiple high-stakes projects, making it challenging to meet client expectations while also engaging in business development and knowledge generation • Lack of centralised planning for pipeline development and prioritisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a market demand assessment of gender integration services in Africa and analyse how GL Advisory services' offerings align with market needs • Establish a high-level unit plan at the start of each year to define the type of work, topics, and funders the advisory team aims to pursue based on market demand. This would enable the team to have a sense of direction, prioritize efforts, track progress, and be proactive • Appropriately staff associates (and recruit more where necessary) to support with capacity and reduce instances of rejecting projects due to limited staff availability

Seven recommendations with significant potential to enhance GL's organisational effectiveness and long-term success were identified and presented in order of priority (2/4)



Recommendation	Objectives	Gaps Addressed	Key Actions/Details
3. Expand donor engagement efforts and internal fundraising capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify funding sources to ensure financial sustainability given the changing donor landscape • Develop in-house fundraising capabilities to enhance business development efforts and further contribute to long-term financial stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships/Donors: reliance on a limited pool of funders across country offices and limited knowledge of the gender donor landscape • Fundraising: a lack of in-house fundraising and business development capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a donor mapping exercise to identify new gender-focused funders, private sector partners, and philanthropic actors aligned with GL's mission • Leverage GL's networks including the Alliance, the Association, board members, and existing partners to facilitate introductions and engagement with potential donors • Hire experienced personnel to support business development/fundraising efforts or identify internal staff that can solely spend time on pipeline development • Build more strategic alliances with other organisations in the gender space to explore co-funding and joint proposal opportunities
4. Renovate GL Cottages facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase GL Cottages' competitiveness to attract a larger customer base, and contribute to GL's long-term sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated facilities, poor service, and infrastructure bottlenecks which hinder GL Cottages from realizing its full potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a high-level analysis before renovating to understand the potential benefits, costs, risks, and implementation timeline • Update the rooms to improve comfort, e.g. adjustable shower heads, curtains/blinds, larger cooling/heating appliances • Purchase water pumps to better distribute water from boreholes across the property. Invest in solar power to reduce dependence on the national grid • Develop a framework to provide guidance on the processes and procedures required to manage the Cottages efficiently and effectively

Seven recommendations with significant potential to enhance GL's organisational effectiveness and long-term success were identified and presented in order of priority (3/4)



Recommendation	Objectives	Gaps Addressed	Key Actions/Details
5. Strengthen HR planning and define capacity needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase ability to sustain impact and scale by ensuring teams are well-structured and adequately resourced • Enhance productivity by defining clear roles and structures, and ensuring adequate staffing levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Planning: minimal workforce planning and staffing inefficiencies • Staffing levels and agility: staff shortages, excessive workload distribution, stretched teams, unhealthy work-life balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire an HR lead or outsource HR capabilities to ensure that the function is sufficiently covered • Develop an HR plan and strategy for workforce planning, talent development and succession planning • Consult with staff to identify additional capacity needs, and hire for core functions (e.g., communications, fundraising, HR) • Ensure realistic budget allocation for key functions, e.g. M&E, communications, and administrative activities. Consider incorporating the budget of these functions in proposals and program budgets • Invest in a platform that integrates HR, finance, and programme functions to alleviate the time spent on administration activities, e.g. Odoo which provides a suite of options that can be highly customized to the organisations' needs • Implement wellness initiatives to support staff's mental health and address burnout, e.g. team bonding events, mental health days, and encouraging staff to use their annual leave
6. Define leadership succession and talent development approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate continuity and sustainability over the long-term by investing in talent development and defining succession plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No defined succession plans across the organisation putting its functioning at risk in the event of staff exits • Inconsistent mentorship and training for junior staff which limits readiness to assume leadership positions and weakens long-term leadership pipelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define succession model for the executive position. Three options to consider include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A CEO that carries all functions ○ Co-CEOs that lead the organisation together ○ Multiple directors anchoring critical workstreams and a CEO to provide leadership and oversight • Establish a leadership pipeline program to mentor and develop internal talent over 2-3 years, ensuring knowledge transfer and leadership readiness. • Leverage external recruitment to identify experienced candidates, provide structured onboarding, and assign mentors to candidates, to facilitate transitions • Implement an annual planning process to forecast potential leadership vacancies, set clear timelines for transitions, and ensure proactive recruitment

Seven recommendations with significant potential to enhance GL's organisational effectiveness and long-term success were identified and presented in order of priority (4/4)



Recommendation	Objectives	Gaps Addressed	Key Actions/Details
7. Conduct a governance review and restructuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen governance structures to improve decision-making clarity, streamline leadership roles, and enhance accountability Improve alignment between the Association, regional, and country boards to foster greater strategic cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Association/regional board/decision-making framework: the lack of clarity on the delineation of roles and decision-making power between the Association and regional board Country Boards: past misalignment between HQ and certain country boards may highlight a need for clearer governance and accountability structures to ensure cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the function/role between the Association and regional board and provide clarity on the nature of the relationship and powers assigned to each Review the decision-making matrix and define which governance body has final decision-making power over key strategic and operational matters Introduce an annual governance review process, assessing decision-making efficiency, power distribution, and role clarity at all levels

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*Country Organisational Effectiveness
Assessment and High-level Donor Mapping*

We identified key areas of importance and relevance for Zimbabwe and Mauritius' organisational effectiveness assessment



Strategic Positioning	Governance and Leadership	Programme of Action	Results for Change	Institutional Effectiveness	Sustainability
Clarity of Vision and Mission	GL Association	Programs /Interventions: Prioritization	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Organisational Structure	Funding Model
Clarity of Shared Values and Culture	Regional Board	Partnerships: The Alliance and NGOs	Knowledge Management	Human Resource Planning	Fundraising: GL Future Fund
Clarity on Impact and Performance Values	Country Boards	Partnerships: Donors	Reporting and Documentation	Succession Planning	Enterprise: Advisory Services
Clarity of Strategy (Planning for Implementation)	Senior Management: Setting Directions	Partnerships: Local Governments	Innovation	People: Staffing Skills and Capacity Building	Enterprise: Grant Management
	Senior Management: Managing People	Target Group Focus	Value for Money Orientation	People: Staffing Levels and Agility	Enterprise: GL Cottages
	Decision-making Framework	WOSSO Fellows Programme		IT and Communications	Fundraising: Other
	Policies and Practices (Work Methods)			Financial Management	Environmental sustainability
	Statutory Requirements				

The sub-components included here were highlighted based on the following considerations: (i) input from Country Directors on the most critical areas for assessing organizational effectiveness; (ii) the exclusion of components relevant only to the regional office; and (iii) the extent of performance and capability gaps observed during field visits

Zimbabwe | GL Zimbabwe's strengths include its clarity of program priorities, strong collaboration with local actors, and supportive leadership that fosters mentorship and growth



	Strengths
Strategic Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of strategy: GL Zimbabwe has clearly defined its own areas of focus based on local needs enabling it to tailor programs effectively. Stakeholders appreciate its autonomy in shaping its own areas of focus.
Governance and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country Boards: The Zimbabwe country board provides strategic oversight and possess deep knowledge of the ongoing programs. • Country Directors – Managing People: Staff feel well-supported by Zimbabwe's leadership, with many acknowledging being given opportunities to expand their responsibilities, such as leading donor engagement and managing programs.
Programs of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Prioritisation: While GL Zimbabwe aligns with the regional strategy, it has identified core focus areas—gender and governance, women's political participation, and economic justice—demonstrating its ability to tailor interventions to local needs. The program on gender and governance (through the Centers of Excellence) is recognized for its self-sustaining model, strong national alignment, and tangible impact. Overall, stakeholders attest that its programs are well-structured and effectively coordinated. • Partnerships – Donors: GL Zimbabwe has independently fostered strong, longstanding donor relationships locally, earning a solid local reputation for delivering impactful programs that align with donor priorities, without relying on regional office support. • Partnerships – Local Government: GL Zimbabwe maintains robust collaborations with local governments through its Centers of Excellence and hub-and-spoke model initiatives. Operating in 10 districts and 72 municipalities, GL Zimbabwe's reach underscores the depth and effectiveness of its local government partnerships.
Results for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Evaluation: Some donors believe GL Zimbabwe effectively demonstrates the progress of its local government work. For instance, the introduction of color coding to assess local government progress is seen to be an innovative and effective approach to monitor their performance. • Donor Reporting: The Zimbabwe office generally meets donor requirements, ensuring transparency and accountability.
Institutional Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession Planning: GL Zimbabwe cultivates a culture of mentorship and leadership development. While informal, GL Zimbabwe has a high-level succession plan and undertakes efforts to prepare key staff for leadership positions.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising/ Funding model: GL Zimbabwe has successfully made efforts to fundraise locally and is thinking of income-generating activities that can contribute to its sustainability.

Zimbabwe | GL Zimbabwe's main areas of improvement include strengthening its MEL and donor reporting, and expanding its donor base to ensure long-term financial sustainability



	Weaknesses
Strategic Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for strategy: As the Zimbabwe office develops its country strategy, it should consider how to align internal capacity with emerging priorities.
Governance and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country Boards: The country board members could leverage their networks to support the office with fundraising and partnership efforts.
Programs of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships – Donors: GL Zimbabwe has built strong partnerships with key donors but remains heavily reliant on a narrow donor pool, limiting its financial resilience. There is a need to diversify funding sources and establish long-term strategic partnerships for financial sustainability. • Partnerships – Local Government: While GL Zimbabwe's partnerships with local government actors are generally well-coordinated, there is opportunity to properly define a framework to guide local government actors in the hub and spoke model to effectively support other local councils. In addition, funding constraint sometimes restricts the scaling of some programs in other districts which limits their impact.
Results for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Evaluation: Staff have reported a need for more training on the existing MEL system and how to embed MEL approaches within their programs. • Donor Reporting: Donor reports could be improved by including more disaggregated data, case studies, and success stories to better showcase impact. Additionally, some donors noted that reports submitted by the GL Zimbabwe team occasionally contained errors, highlighting the need for stronger internal review and quality control processes.
Institutional Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People – Skills and Capacity Building: There is a critical need for staff upskilling in key areas such as MEL, proposal writing, and strategic communication to improve program effectiveness and donor engagement. • People – Staffing levels: While the team is highly adaptable, the current multi-tasking model is unsustainable and negatively impacts work quality and staff well-being.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding model: There is a need for GL Zimbabwe to diversify its donor base and explore income-generating activities to reduce dependency on a limited pool of external funders.








Donor Mapping | The following framework can be used to identify funders aligned with Zimbabwe's core areas of programming



	Gender and Governance	Economic Empowerment
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female political participation • Gender-responsive governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship • Employment and Skills Development • Financial Inclusion
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives that support organizations in strengthening democratic participation, leadership, and governance structures to promote inclusive decision-making at local and national levels.	Initiatives that strengthen institutions to provide quality training, resources and support to women in starting/expanding businesses or formalizing businesses. This also includes initiatives that support women to access education and upskilling opportunities to improve their employability
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies that foster a conducive environment for female engagement in leadership, and that build public awareness about gender issues across government policies and efforts	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and interventions that foster a conducive environment for female entrepreneurs and workers; and that build public awareness about gender issues in the labor market
Data & information systems	Initiatives that support the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data on women's participation in governance, political leadership, and decision-making.	Initiatives that focus on the collection of gender-disaggregated data, creation of databases, or commission of studies concerning female participation in the labor market














Donor Mapping | There are several donors that GL Zimbabwe can target focused on gender and governance



	Description	Interventions	Funders	
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives that support organizations in strengthening democratic participation, women's leadership, and governance structures to promote inclusive decision-making at local and national levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity Building programs for women in leadership and governance Programs supporting mainstreaming within local government and public institutions Strengthening partnerships between civil society organisations, policy makers, and local governments to advance gender-responsive governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UN Women AFDB UNDP World Bank African Women's Development Fund Co-Impact Fund 	    
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement/enforce policies that prevent and combat GBV and marriage laws to end child marriage; as well as builds public awareness about gender justice and women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy campaigns for legal and policy reforms to promote gender equality in governance, Supporting in implementation of efforts e.g., agenda quotas to increase women political participation Engaging women in leadership positions to effectively advocate for women rights/ gender responsive policies in government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP Ford Foundation International IDEA SIDA European Union 	 
Data & information systems	Initiatives that focus on the collection of gender-disaggregated data, creation of databases, or commission of studies concerning female safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collection and tracking of key data indicators Development of gender governance scoreboards Conducting research on the status, challenges, opportunities for women leadership and governance Producing reports and materials to inform decision-making in gender and governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Bank Gender Data Initiative UN Women Urgent Action Fund Africa 	

Donor Mapping | There are several donors that GL Zimbabwe can target focused on economic empowerment



	Description	Interventions	Funders	
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives that strengthen institutions to provide quality training, resources and support to women in starting/expanding businesses or formalizing businesses. This also includes initiatives that support women to access education and upskilling opportunities to improve their employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and mentoring programs for women entrepreneurs • Facilitating access to finance and credit for women-owned businesses • Strengthening women-led cooperatives and small enterprises • Supporting skills development and vocational training for women and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN Women • World Bank • Mastercard Foundation • The Tony Elumelu Foundation • Graca Machel Trust • World Bank • African Women's Development Fund 	       
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and interventions that foster a conducive environment for female entrepreneurs and workers; and that build public awareness about gender issues in the labor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for gender-responsive budgeting and policy frameworks • Engaging policymakers to address legal and regulatory barriers limiting women's economic participation • Promoting fair labor policies and equal pay initiatives • Strengthening gender inclusion in national economic strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP • UK Aid • African Union 	   
Data & information systems	Initiatives that focus on the collection of gender-disaggregated data, creation of databases, or commission of studies concerning female participation in the labor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection and tracking of key data indicators • Establishing gender-sensitive economic indicators and data tracking mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank • Gates Foundation 	

Mauritius | GL Mauritius's core strengths include its holistic programs and strong engagement with local actors including private sector actors and other NGOs



	Strengths
Strategic Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of strategy: GL Mauritius has successfully adapted Gender Links' broader vision and mission to fit the unique national context. Through its Safe Haven Shelter, the office implements programs that address key issues such as gender-based violence, women's access to justice, sexual and reproductive health rights, and economic empowerment.
Programs of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Prioritisation: The Safe Haven shelter offers transformational support to female survivors of abuse. Through holistic interventions—including mental health services, childcare support, and financial management training—the GL Mauritius team fosters sustainable, long-term empowerment for the women and children in their care • Partnerships with Donors: GL Mauritius has strong relationships with the few donors it works with. In addition, the office engages with the private sector to access CSR funding • Partnerships with Local Government: The office was established effective partners with local government actors and has collaborated with them to deliver trainings and raise awareness around its focal issues
Results for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEL and Innovation: GL Mauritius effectively tracks the impact of its interventions. For example, the office has a robust mechanism in place to monitor the rehabilitation progress of women after they leave the shelter
Institutional Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications: The Mauritius team has established strong relationships with local radio and TV outlets, using these platforms to raise awareness and educate communities on key issues such as gender-based violence and women's empowerment • Succession Planning: The office has an informal succession plan in place for the country director role
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding model: GL Mauritius is exploring new initiatives to diversify its funding sources, including adopting a cooperative model in which shelter residents produce and sell goods • Fundraising: The office has successfully secured funding and resources through innovative approaches—such as land donations and private sector sources—demonstrating its proactive efforts to diversify funding sources

Mauritius | Key areas for improvement include enhancing staff capacity through training, improving external communications, and strengthening long-term sustainability efforts



	Weaknesses
Programs of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with NGOs and the Alliance: Gender Links Mauritius can strengthen its engagement with the Alliance and local NGOs to increase impact
Governance and Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country Boards: The country board members could leverage their networks to better support the team with its fundraising and partnerships efforts
Results for Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Evaluation: Staff require more training on GL systems, including finance and MEL • Donor Reporting: Donor reports can be strengthened by incorporating more disaggregated data, case studies, and success stories to better demonstrate impact
Institutional Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People – Skills and Capacity Building: There is a need for more training on existing GL systems (including finance and MEL) and proposal writing • People – Staffing Levels: As the shelter expands, GL Mauritius needs to clearly define staff roles and responsibilities, filling in any gaps that arise • Succession: While an informal succession plan exists for the Country Director role, additional planning is needed for other critical areas—such as childcare at the shelter—to ensure continuity of operations • Communications: GL Mauritius could further leverage social media and digital platforms to amplify its advocacy efforts and raise awareness on critical gender issues
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding model: GL Mauritius currently relies on a limited pool of funders, presenting an opportunity to diversify its funding sources and strengthen financial sustainability • Fundraising: A lack of proposal writing skills is limiting the office’s business development efforts. Additionally, there is a knowledge gap around potential donors in the gender space that GL Mauritius could strategically target




Donor Mapping | The following framework can be used to identify funders aligned with Mauritius' core areas of programming



	Gender Justice and Women's Rights	LGBTQ+ Rights	Health
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender-Based Violence • Access to Shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights • Children rights
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives that help organizations expand their service scope and reach in providing direct support to female victims of GBV and that engage men and boys as part of programming	Initiatives aimed at enhancing the rights and well-being of LGBTQI+ individuals through community-based programs, healthcare services, and strategic partnerships	Initiatives that enhance the ability of organizations providing women, girls and children with increased access to basic social services and necessities
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement/enforce policies/laws that prevent and combat GBV; as well as build public awareness about gender justice and women's rights	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, combat discrimination, and promote inclusive governance structures	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and interventions that enable women to have sufficient access to social services and necessities; and that build public awareness about gender issues in health and food.
Data & information systems	Initiatives that focus on the collection of gender-disaggregated data, creation of databases, or commission of studies concerning gender justice and women's rights	Initiatives that focus on collecting data, research, and evidence to support advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and measure progress on legal and social inclusion	Initiatives focused on collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data to inform programs and policies related to women's and children's health and nutrition.







Donor Mapping | There are several donors that GL Mauritius can target focused on Gender Justice and Women's Rights



	Description	Interventions	Funders	
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives that help organizations expand their service scope and reach in providing direct support to female victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing safe spaces and shelters for women • Provide emotional and medical support to victims • Providing legal and financial assistance • Delivering workshops on self-defense and navigating safety issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNFPA • UNICEF • UN Women • GIZ • World Bank Group • Graca Machel Trust 	
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement/enforce policies that prevent and combat GBV and marriage laws to end child marriage; as well as builds public awareness about gender justice and women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing media and marketing campaigns to build awareness on women's rights • Engaging in discussions with policymakers and leaders on why and how they can implement laws on GBV and child marriage • Strengthening the capacity and voice of women's rights groups • Engaging men on gender justice issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford Foundation • UN Women • The Global Fund for Women 	
Data & information systems	Initiatives that focus on the collection of gender-disaggregated data, creation of databases, or commission of studies concerning female safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection and tracking of key data indicators • Building publicly available platforms where data and information can be disseminated • Conducting research on the status, challenges, opportunities around female safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ford Foundation 	

Donor Mapping | There are several donors that GL Mauritius can target focused on LGBTQI+ rights



	Description	Interventions	Funders	
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives aimed at enhancing the rights and well-being of LGBTQI+ individuals through community-based programs, healthcare services, and strategic partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing safe spaces and support centers offering counseling, legal aid, and social services to LGBTQI+ individuals.. Conducting workshops and seminars in communities to promote understanding and acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hivos The Baring Foundation Arcus Foundation Canada Fund for Local Initiatives 	  
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and legal protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, combat discrimination, and promote inclusive governance structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with policymakers, religious leaders, and community influencers to promote inclusive policies and practices Utilizing media platforms to disseminate positive narratives about LGBTQI+ individuals and counteract prejudice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP LGBTQI+ Amplify Change Global Fund for Women Canada Fund for Local Initiatives 	 
Data & information systems	Initiatives that focus on collecting data, research, and evidence to support advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and measure progress on legal and social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting and tracking of key data indicators Creating databases and online platforms to share resources, best practices, and research findings among stakeholders and the broader community. Conducting comprehensive studies to understand the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in Mauritius, including discrimination, health disparities, and social exclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arcus Foundation 	

Donor Mapping | There are several donors that GL Mauritius can target focused on women and child health



	Description	Interventions	Funders	
Programming & partnerships	Initiatives aimed at enhancing the health and well-being of women victims and children through comprehensive healthcare services, nutritional support, and community-based programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering sexual and reproductive health services, maternal care, and counseling for women. Providing pediatric healthcare, immunizations, and nutritional support for children. Conducting workshops on health education, preventive care, and women's rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNFPA Children's Investment Fund Foundation SOS Children's Village UNDP World Bank Group UNICEF 	
Policy & advocacy	Initiatives that lobby governments to implement policies and interventions that enable women to have sufficient access to social services and necessities; and that build public awareness about gender issues in health and food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaigning for policies that ensure access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services Promoting laws that safeguard children's rights to health and nutrition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP Global Fund for Women AmplifyChange European Union Graça Machel Trust Ford Foundation 	
Data & information systems	Initiatives focused on collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data to inform programs and policies related to women's and children's health and nutrition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting and tracking of key data indicators Building publicly available platforms where data and information can be disseminated Conducting research on the status, challenges, and opportunities regarding female health and food security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada Fund for Local Initiatives UNICEF Ford Foundation World Bank 	

Donor Mapping | Country offices can use the funders identified in the high-level donor maps, along with the template provided below, to conduct a detailed donor mapping exercise



Illustrative

	UN Women	UNFPA
Thematic focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic empowerment Health and nutrition Gender justice and women's rights Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and nutrition Gender justice and women's rights
Estimated spend	~ USD 6.4 million invested in women's initiatives in West Africa from the Fund for Gender Equality between 2009-2019	USD 178.9 million in total program expenses for West and Central Africa in 2019
Major programs in West Africa	<p>The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE): is a global grantmaking programme focused on supporting women-led civil society organizations to accelerate women's economic and political empowerment. In West and Central Africa, FGE has worked with rural women, youth, socio-economically vulnerable women and survivors of GBV.</p> <p>Initiative for Empowering Women Farmers (Benin): is a beneficiary of FGE and established women's savings and loans groups and encouraged income-generating activities to boost food productivity and security. Nearly 5,200 rural women, accessed land and gained agricultural skills, and developed self-confidence as entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>UNFPA empowered the women and young people in the West and Central Africa region through improved sexual and reproductive health services and increased access to family planning. Investments strengthened countries' capacities to provide and distribute reproductive health supplies.</p> <p>UNFPA is conducting a study on the impact of COVID-19 on GBV in Mali and is preparing to fund a similar one in Benin.</p> <p>Adolescent Girls Initiative (Nigeria): the goal of the initiative is to improve the social, economic and health wellbeing of rural and low-income urban adolescent girls and secure their future</p>
Major programs in Africa	The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality: the initiative seeks to accelerate existing efforts to generate comparable gender indicators on health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and asset ownership. It is a joint initiative of the United Nations Statistics Division and UN Women, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, the AfDB, FAO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank. Within Africa the two pilot countries are South Africa and Uganda	<p>UNFPA helped reduce preventable maternal deaths in the East and Southern Africa region through greater access to emergency obstetric care; antenatal, safe-delivery and postnatal care; and modern contraception.</p> <p>UNFPA and UNICEF have a Global Programme to End Child Marriage - in Zambia they have partnered with the CSO Coalition on Ending Child Marriage as a strategic advocacy actor in the implementation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and its costed National Action Plan.</p>

Stakeholder Interview Lists

Interviews: Internal stakeholders consulted



Stakeholder category	Name	Role	Location
The Association	Dr Athaliah Molokomme	GL Co-Founder and Association Member	Regional Hub
	Thenjiwe Mtintso	GL Co-Founder and Association Member	Regional Hub
Regional Board	Emily Brown	Board Chair	Regional Hub
	Sarah Mistry	Deputy Chair	Regional Hub
Country Board	Josephine Ncube	Country Board Chair	Zimbabwe
	Sunungurai Chingarande	Secretary	Zimbabwe
Executive Leadership	Colleen Lowe Morna	GL Co-Founder and Special Advisor	Regional Hub
	Debrah Mukuku	Director, GL Regional Hub	Regional Hub
Country Directors/Heads	Priscilla Maposa	Director, GL Zimbabwe and Regional Programmes	Zimbabwe
	Anushka Virahsawmy	Director, GL Mauritius and Francophone Operations	Mauritius
	Iafine Papisy	Programme Associate, GL Madagascar	Madagascar
Staff	Tabetha Kanengani-Malinga	Programme Manager, WOSSO	Regional Hub
	Thandokuhle Dlamini	Communications Officer	Regional Hub
	Debi Lee	Publications and Productions Associate	Regional Hub
	Deborah Walter	Communications Consultant	Regional Hub
	Fanuel Hadzizi	M&E Coordinator	Regional Hub
	Monica Bandeira	M&E Associate	Regional Hub
	Kevin Chiramba	Gender Justice Associate	Regional Hub
	Susan Tolmay	Gender and Governance Associate	Regional Hub
	Fikile Maviya	Grants Compliance Manager	Regional Hub
	Nomthandazo Mankazana	Women's Voice and Leadership SA Fund Manager	Regional Hub
	Thenjiwe Ngcobo	Women's Voice and Leadership SA	Regional Hub
	Tapiwa Zvaraya	Programme Coordinator	Zimbabwe
	Juliet Rusawu	Finance and Admin Officer	Zimbabwe
	Devan Saitee	Senior Finance and Programme Officer	Mauritius
	Kelly Figaro	Safe Haven Assistant	Mauritius
	Emma	Admin Assistant	Mauritius

Interviews: External stakeholders consulted



Stakeholder category	Name	Role	Location
Fellows	Ulemu Hannah Kanyongolo	WOSSO Fellow	Malawi
	Jennifer Abomnger	WOSSO Fellow	Nigeria
	Veronika Haimbili	WOSSO Fellow	Namibia
Donors	Claire Ambrose	Senior Reporting Officer, FCDO	Regional Hub
	Louise Coskeran	Social Development Advisor, UK High Commission, South Africa	Regional Hub
	Tsitsi Fungurani	Gender Lead, Water Aid Southern Africa (formerly Voice and Leadership Manager at Global Affairs Canada)	Regional Hub
	Linia Mawire	Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden	Zimbabwe
	Wonder Jekemu	Programme Officer , Embassy of Sweden	Zimbabwe
Local governments	Dorothy Mavalwane	Head of M&E, City of Harare	Zimbabwe
	Malesow Lesow	Community Council	Lesotho
	Alderman Resta DzvinYangoma	Murewa Rural District Council	Zimbabwe
Other partners	Evita Fakun	Member of Stakeholder Council	Mauritius
	Soblen Ramen	Manager (Radio General) Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation	Mauritius

Please note that ten additional external stakeholders were consulted across the four locations (i.e. local government representatives, beneficiaries, and other partners)