

<b>RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY</b> <b>2025 - 2030</b>	
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The signatures below certify that this document has been reviewed and accepted and demonstrates that the signatories are aware of all the requirements contained herein and are committed to ensuring their provision.

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Name	<b>Debrah Mukuku</b>	Signature	
	Role	<b>Director GL Regional Hub</b>		
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	Name	<b>Colleen Lowe Morna</b>	Signature	
	Role	<b>Special Advisor</b>		
<b>Approved by:</b>	Name	<b>Gender Links Board</b>	Signature	
	Role	<b>Board of Directors</b>		

These Policies take into account the laws prevailing in all the GL countries of operation. Should there be a contradiction between the Policies and national laws, the latter shall take precedence except where, in the interest of fairness, policies have been standardised across countries. All GL staff, associates and consultants are bound by GL Policies through their contracts. This policy should be read together with all relevant policies.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT DEFINITION**

1. Risk management is a systematic process of identifying, evaluating and reducing losses associated with an organisation, its employees or visitors, property loss or damage, and other sources of potential legal liability.

## **PURPOSE**

2. This policy establishes a structured and consistent approach to identifying, assessing, managing, monitoring, and reporting risks across all Gender Links country offices, with risk management consolidation and oversight at the regional level. The policy supports effective decision-making, protects organisational assets and reputation, and ensures alignment with strategic objectives. This policy aims to maximise opportunities in all Gender Links country office activities while putting in place the necessary risk mitigation measures.
2. Gender Links considers risk management to be fundamental to good management practice and a significant aspect of corporate governance. The organisation is committed to excellence and continual improvement and will continue to encourage innovation whilst maintaining a low-risk profile. Staff are encouraged to adopt a positive approach to risk management, which further strengthens the risk-aware culture (as opposed to a risk-averse culture) of the organisation.
3. Gender Links **Risk Management Policy** seeks to establish the process for the management of risks faced by the organisation. The main objective of the policy is to ensure sustainable organisational growth with stability and to promote a proactive approach in reporting, evaluating and resolving risks associated with the organisation. The policy applies to all activities and processes associated with the normal operation of Gender Links.
4. The policy also seeks to support effective decision-making that is guided by the Gender Links Mission and Vision.
5. Ensure a consistent and effective approach to risk management;
6. Formalise its commitment to the principles of risk management and incorporate these into all areas of Gender Links;
7. Foster and encourage a risk-aware culture where risk management is seen as a positive attribute of decision-making rather than a corrective measure;
8. Align the Gender Links planning, quality and risk management systems, and their integration into all areas of the organisation's operations; and
9. Ensure robust corporate governance practices effectively manage risk while allowing innovation and development.

## SCOPE

10. This Risk Management policy applies to:
  - All Gender Links Country Offices
  - GL Programmes including the Grants and Fellowships unit
  - Gender Links Services, including GL Cottages
  - The Gender Links Regional Hub Office
  - All employees, service providers, grantees, fellows and implementing partnersIt covers strategic, operational, financial, compliance, reputational, safeguarding, and external risks.
11. All organisational decisions will be made with sufficient information about an activity from the relevant experts in the area, e.g. finance investment, programme activities, and acceptance of risk involved. Risk management is incorporated into all areas of Gender Links' operations, including corporate governance and programming.
12. The risk management policy shall provide for the enhancement and protection of business value from uncertainties and consequent losses.
13. The risk management policy shall inform all programming activities pertaining to governance, media, and alliance programmes at Gender Links and the organisation's partnership strategy.
14. All employees of the company shall be made aware by management through risk awareness dissemination sessions of the risks in their respective domains and their mitigation measures. Critical incident management and work, health and safety risks are covered by the Gender Links policies and procedures.

## PRINCIPLES

15. **Risk Management Principles** The organisation's risk management must:
  - Align with its Mission and Vision;
  - Be embedded within its operations, processes and systems;
  - Have clear accountability, ownership and governance;
  - Be systematic, transparent and consistently applied;
  - Include effective consultation and communication;
  - Consider the context (both the internal and external environment);
  - Support evidence-based decision-making; and
  - Facilitate continual improvement.

## RISK CATEGORIES

16. Recognising the kind of risks that the organisation may be exposed to, risks will be classified broadly into the following categories:

**Strategic Risk** includes the range of external events and trends (Like Government policy, competition, court rulings or changes in stakeholder requirements) that can adversely impact Gender Links' strategic growth.

**Operational Risk** –are those risks that are associated with operational uncertainties, such as changes in the political environment through legislative developments, that are not favourable to GL activities.

**Programmatic risks** – these are risks associated with the execution of the organisation's vision and mission through programmes and projects. These risks include the following:

- *Management* - Building a strong gender movement in the SADC region will rely on the expertise of potential organisations to be part of the strong coalition. This may pose difficulties in sharing responsibilities and ownership of the project or programme
- *Fiduciary* – GL relies on donor funding to implement its projects. Unfavourable funding environments pose a risk in programme implementation and sustainability. GL implements projects through partners across 10 SADC countries with different currencies, financial controls, systems and exchange rate fluctuations. There is a need to exercise stringent financial diligence to avoid financial loss whilst balancing this with cultivating effective partnerships.
- *Political* – Most of Gender Links work is implemented with governments, posing political risks. Some programmatic issues are difficult to implement due to the policies and legislation of particular governments.
- *Cultural* - The SADC region is deeply patriarchal, with slow uptake of gender equality as a human right. Since Gender Links' work is mainly focused on achieving gender equality, smart partnerships with the community and traditional leadership are critical.
- *Geographic* – Gender Links implements its programmes across the 16 SADC countries. Some countries pose peace and security risks, making it difficult for GL to implement its programmes. Some geographical landscapes are difficult to reach due to the rough landscape terrain, posing impact/outreach risks
- *Partnership management* – Partnerships form part of the strategic pillars of Gender Links. GL continuously needs to balance the value of SMART partnerships and autonomy. This poses programme ownership risks.

***Legal and Regulatory Risks*** –These may include any of the following factors:

- Change in legislation which may impact the organisation adversely
- Failure to obtain appropriate approval from regulatory bodies: For Gender Links' physical properties, it is critical to ensure all relevant Zoning Rights are acquired
- Loss of operating/ intellectual property rights
- Unexpected regulatory controls of licensing requirements
- Failure to achieve satisfactory contractual arrangements
- Changes in tax structure

***Management or human factor risks*** – these are risks such as loss of staff due to unexpected resignations, incompetence, lack of clarity over roles, and health and safety constraints.

***Economic/ Financial Risks*** –These include the following:

- Failure to obtain sufficient donor funding
- Exchange rate fluctuations
- Interest rate instability
- Political environment

## RISK ASSESSMENT

17. **Gender Links Risk Assessment Process** consists of the following steps:

- **Identify** the risk events that may prevent or delay the achievement of the organisation’s strategic goals and objectives.
- **Analyse** – Outline the causes, impacts and existing treatments to assess the consequence and likelihood of the risk and determine the risk rating.
- **Treat** – Implement both existing and future treatments to prevent and/or mitigate the risk.
- **Monitor** – Continually monitor and evaluate the risks and treatments to maintain the effectiveness and appropriateness of Gender Link’s risk management.
- **Report**– Provide regular reports and updates to assure the organisation and key stakeholders that the risks are being appropriately managed and treated.

18. Gender Links shall maintain a risk register to be reviewed each quarter by the Audit and Risk Committee. Each risk must be assessed using:

	Minimal	Maintain Existing Measures
	Low	Review Control Measures
	Medium	Improve Control Measures
	High	Improve Control Measures immediately and consider stopping work activity until risk reduced

## RESPONSIBILITIES

19. The Board of Directors, through the Audit and Risk Committee, is entrusted with the responsibility for overseeing the Risk Management Program at Gender Links and its country offices across the SADC Region.

20. Gender Links Senior Management and Country Directors provide country boards and the regional board with the necessary information categorised as below:

RISK CATEGORY	GL COUNTRY	PROGRAMMES	GL SERVICES	GL COTTAGES	GL REGIONAL	REGIONAL BOARD
Manager	Country Directors	Director Programmes	Special Advisor	GLC Manager	Director Regional Hub	
Board	Country Boards	Programmes Committee	GL Services Committee		Audit and Risk Committee	Exco
Frequency	Twice a year	Twice a year	Twice a year		Quarterly	Twice a year
<b>EXTERNAL</b>						
Strategic Risks						
Economic Financial risks						
Programmatic Risks						
Legal Regulatory risks						
<b>INTERNAL</b>						
Operational risks						
Management and Human Factor Risks						

**Country Directors are responsible for:**

- Identifying and documenting country-specific risks
- Maintaining a Country Risk Register
- Conducting periodic risk assessments (minimum quarterly)
- Implementing risk mitigation and control measures
- Escalating significant or emerging risks to the Regional Office
- Reporting risk status through structured reporting templates
- Furnishing the risk register to the Country Board through country ARC committees

**Country ARCs and Boards are responsible for**

- Mitigating risks within their sphere of operation
- Escalating risks that impact on the whole organisation to GL Regional Board.

**The Director of Programmes and Special Advisor** are responsible with managers of their various units for identifying risks in their portfolios.

**The Director Gender Links Regional Hub** is responsible for:

- Consolidating all Country Risk Registers into a Regional Risk Register
- Identifying cross-country and systemic risks
- Providing guidance, standards, and tools
- Reviewing country risk quality and consistency

**Regional Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)**

- Reviews high and critical risks
- Ensures alignment with regional strategy
- Advises on major mitigation actions

**Regional Board**

- **Assesses** consolidated risks and takes decisions on ways to mitigate risks.