

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

Volunteer Advisor – Institutional Development and Strengthening

Engagement: Voluntary / Pro Bono | Duration: Six (6) months

Modality: Remote / Virtual | Reporting to: AWLN Global Coordinator

Deadline: Friday 23rd October 2026

1. Background

The African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) is a continental movement established in 2017 under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) to advance African women's leadership and influence in peace and security, governance, economic development and other strategic sectors. As AWLN expands its footprint, partnerships and programmes, strengthening its institutional foundations is essential for effective governance, operational coherence and long-term sustainability.

2. Objective

Provide strategic and technical advisory support to the AWLN Secretariat in reviewing and refining existing institutionalization documents, translating the institutionalization framework into practical arrangements, and supporting its implementation and effective functioning, alongside strengthening governance, operational systems and organizational sustainability.

3. Scope of Work

Institutional architecture and governance: Review AWLN's existing institutionalization documents-operational manual, frameworks and proposed governance arrangements; identify gaps and recommend refinements; clarify mandates, decision-making, accountability and coordination across the Secretariat, leadership bodies and National Chapters.

Organizational development and systems: review, Advise on organizational structures, Secretariat functions, internal policies, standard operating procedures and practical coordination tools; support their adoption, operationalization and day-to-day functioning.

Institutionalization implementation and sustainability: Support the translation of approved institutionalization documents into a phased implementation plan; advise on sequencing, roles, milestones and operational requirements; provide ongoing technical support to resolve implementation challenges, establish functioning arrangements and strengthen institutional sustainability.

Institutional gatherings and statutory meetings: Support the planning, coordination and preparation of AWLN institutional gatherings and statutory meetings, including agendas, documentation, decision records and follow-up on agreed actions, in compliance with the rules and procedures set out in the AWLN Operational Manual. Review and advise on revisions to the Operational Manual as a foundational instrument for institutional strengthening, and support the practical application of its approved provisions to ensure the effective functioning of AWLN governance and institutional bodies.

Knowledge transfer: Share relevant methodologies and international good practices; mentor designated Secretariat personnel and facilitate virtual technical sessions.

4. Expected Deliverables

1. Concise institutional assessment identifying strengths, gaps and opportunities.
2. Practical institutionalization implementation roadmap with actions, responsible actors, timelines, milestones and follow-up mechanisms.
3. Documented review and recommended revisions of existing AWLN institutionalization documents, governance frameworks and operational procedures. This includes the AWLN Operational Manual and recommendations for its application to statutory meetings and institutional governance.

4. At least two virtual knowledge-sharing or capacity-strengthening sessions.

5. Implementation support and final advisory report documenting operationalization progress, functioning arrangements, remaining gaps and next steps. Include technical support to institutional gatherings and statutory meetings, with appropriate documentation and follow-up arrangements.

5. Required Expertise

Demonstrated experience in institution building, organizational development, governance or strategic management; familiarity with regional, international, nonprofit or multilateral institutions; strong analytical and advisory skills. Knowledge of AU, UN or African networks is an asset.

6. Duration and Working Arrangements

The assignment will last six (6) months and be conducted entirely virtually on a flexible, part-time basis, with commitments mutually agreed according to AWLN priorities and volunteer availability. Engagement will include virtual meetings, document review and written advisory inputs.

7. Reporting and Coordination

The Volunteer Advisor will work under the guidance of the AWLN Global Coordinator and collaborate with relevant Secretariat personnel and stakeholders as appropriate.

8. Voluntary Nature and Confidentiality

This is an unpaid, pro bono advisory engagement with no salary or consultancy fee. It does not establish an employment relationship with AWLN, the African Union or the United Nations. The advisor shall maintain confidentiality of internal information and documents.

9. Expected Outcome

Reviewed and strengthened institutionalization documents, a practical implementation pathway, operational governance and coordination arrangements, and increased Secretariat capacity to implement and sustain AWLN's institutional framework. Statutory meetings and institutional gatherings are coordinated in line with the revised Operational Manual and agreed governance procedures.

10. How to Apply

Interested Individuals must submit the following documents detailing your qualifications:

- A cover letter of interest explaining why you are applying for this position and what you hope to gain from the internship and how you can contribute to the African Women Leaders Network, particularly in strengthening engagement with the Young Women Leaders Caucus
- A CV detailing your qualifications and suitability for the work including a link to your portfolio of work

Kindly submit the documents to awlnetwork2017@gmail.com