



AFRICAN  
WOMEN'S  
DEVELOPMENT  
FUND

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## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Consultant to Conduct Regional Research and Develop Knowledge Products on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV), Gender, and Democratic Civic Space in Africa**

#### **1. Background**

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a pan-African feminist grantmaker that resources, strengthens, and accompanies women's rights and feminist organisations and movements across the continent. Through its Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) portfolio, AWDF supports feminist organisations working to prevent and respond to online and technology-enabled forms of violence while advancing gender justice, digital rights, and democratic participation.

Across Africa, digital technologies have become critical spaces for civic engagement, organising, advocacy, and political participation. At the same time, shrinking civic space, democratic backsliding, and the increasing use of online harassment, surveillance, disinformation, and gendered attacks have created new threats to women, feminist activists, journalists, human rights defenders, and marginalised communities. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence has emerged as both a manifestation of structural gender inequality and a mechanism through which democratic participation and civic freedoms are constrained.

To strengthen evidence-based advocacy, learning, and grantmaking, AWDF seeks to engage a consultant to undertake regional research examining the intersections between TFGBV, gender, digital technologies, and democratic civic space in Africa. The assignment will

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generate knowledge products that contribute to movement learning, policy engagement, and feminist responses to digital authoritarianism and democratic erosion.

## 2. Purpose of the assignment

The primary objective of this consultancy is to generate robust, evidence-based insights on the scale and nature of TFGBV in Africa, specifically focusing on its role in democratic erosion. The research will investigate how digital technologies are weaponized to silence feminist voices and how this impact varies across diverse socio-political and economic contexts within the AWDF portfolio.

The purpose of this consultancy is to generate robust, evidence-based insights on TFGBV in Africa, with particular attention to its links with democratic erosion and the intersections between gender, digital technologies, and civic participation.

The consultant will produce research and accompanying knowledge products that strengthen understanding of emerging trends, challenges, feminist responses, and opportunities for collective action across the continent.

## 3. Objectives

The consultancy will pursue the following objectives:

- Conduct regional research on the nature, prevalence, and impacts of TFGBV within changing democratic and civic space contexts across Africa.
- Analyse how digital technologies are being used to facilitate gendered violence, silence dissent, restrict civic participation, and undermine feminist organising.
- Document feminist strategies, movement responses, and promising practices for addressing TFGBV and defending digital civic space.

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- Produce accessible knowledge products that support learning, advocacy, grantmaking, and policy engagement by women's rights and feminist organisations.

#### 4. Scope of work

The consultant will undertake the following tasks:

The assignment will begin with an inception phase, including a detailed methodology, workplan, and analytical framework. The consultant will conduct a desk review of relevant literature, policy frameworks, regional reports, and existing evidence on TFGBV, gender, digital rights, and democratic governance in Africa.

The consultant will engage key stakeholders, including feminist organisations, digital rights actors, researchers, activists, and AWDF partners, through interviews, focus groups, or virtual consultations to capture diverse regional perspectives and lived experiences.

The research should analyse the relationship between technology-facilitated violence and broader trends in democratic erosion, including shrinking civic space, online surveillance, disinformation, electoral processes, digital repression, and attacks against women human rights defenders and feminist movements.

Building on the findings, the consultant will develop user-friendly knowledge products that translate evidence into accessible insights for movement actors, policymakers, and donors.

The consultant will be required to:

- Analyse Regional Trends
- Examine Democratic Erosion
- Map the Lethal Continuum
- Assess Intersectionality
- Review Regulatory Frameworks

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- Generate key insights for movement actors, policymakers, and donors

## 5. Methodological approach

The assignment should adopt feminist, participatory, and ethically grounded research approaches. The consultant is expected to centre the experiences, knowledge, and agency of women, feminist activists, and marginalised communities while ensuring principles of care, informed consent, confidentiality, and digital safety throughout the research process.

Intersectional analysis should guide the study, taking into account how gender intersects with age, sexuality, disability, geography, language, and other dimensions of identity and exclusion. Particular attention should be paid to regional diversity and varying political contexts across the African continent.

The consultant will adopt a "Future-Back" methodology, framing recommendations not just against current harms but against the foreseeable trajectory of technological change (e.g., quantum computing threats and generative AI).

## 6. Expected deliverables

The consultant will deliver the following outputs:

Deliverable	Description	Indicative Timeline
Inception report	Detailed methodology, workplan, analytical framework, and data collection tools	Week 2

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Draft regional research report	Comprehensive report presenting findings, analysis, case studies, and recommendations	Week 8
Final regional research report	Revised report incorporating AWDF feedback	Week 10
Knowledge products	At least two accessible products (e.g., policy brief, learning brief, infographic, or thought piece) tailored to different audiences	Week 12
Presentation of findings	Virtual dissemination session with AWDF staff, partners, and relevant stakeholders	Week 12

## 7. Duration of the consultancy

The consultancy is expected to be undertaken over a period of twelve (12) weeks, with all deliverables mandated for completion by 31 October 2026.

## 8. Reporting and management

The consultant will directly report to the Programme Officer responsible for the TFGBV portfolio and supervised by the Programmes Manager Resourcing. The consultant will work closely with AWDF's Communications teams to ensure alignment between research outputs and knowledge dissemination strategies.

All deliverables shall remain the intellectual property of AWDF.

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## 9. Required qualifications and experience

The consultant or consulting team should demonstrate:

- Advanced academic qualifications in gender studies, political science, digital rights, sociology, development studies, communications, or a related field.
- At least five years of experience conducting research on gender, human rights, democratic governance, civic space, digital technologies, or related thematic areas in Africa.
- Demonstrated expertise in Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, digital rights, feminist movements, or online safety.
- Strong understanding of African political and civic contexts and contemporary debates on democratic participation and digital governance.
- Proven experience producing high-quality research reports, policy briefs, and knowledge products for diverse audiences.
- Familiarity with feminist, participatory, and intersectional research methodologies.
- Excellent analytical, writing, and facilitation skills in English; knowledge of French will be an asset.

## 10. Submission requirements

Interested consultants should submit the following to [consultants@awdf.org](mailto:consultants@awdf.org) by **17th July 2026**. Please put as the email subject header, "Application for consultancy: Regional Research on TFGBV."

- A technical proposal outlining their understanding of the assignment, methodology, and workplan.
- A financial proposal with a detailed budget.
- A curriculum vitae highlighting relevant experience.

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- A sample of previous research reports or knowledge products on similar themes.
- Contact details for at least two professional references.

## 11. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be assessed based on demonstrated thematic expertise, methodological quality, understanding of feminist approaches to research, experience in the African context, quality of previous work, and value for money.

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