

## **Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence against Women**

### **Civil Society Regional Network – Terms of Reference**

#### **Background**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most pervasive human rights violation worldwide. Nearly thirty years after the Beijing Platform for Action, despite unprecedented momentum and commitments to advance gender equality, the prevalence of VAWG has remained persistent.<sup>[1]</sup> Global emergencies, crises, and conflict have further intensified the drivers and risk factors of VAWG, and digitalization has exacerbated existing forms of violence and led to the proliferation of new forms. At the same time, the rise in anti-rights movements, shrinking space for civil society and backlash against women's rights are undermining efforts to prevent VAWG and leading to a rise in attacks against women's rights activists.

Despite these disturbing trends, there is more evidence than ever that violence against women and girls can be prevented. Evidence demonstrates that the presence of a strong and empowered feminist movement is one of the most critical factors in driving policy change to end violence against women and girls, both in transnational and in national policy-making contexts.<sup>[2]</sup> Studies have also shown that VAWG can be reduced on a large scale through multi-sectoral actions coordinated by governments and civil society, including intensive advocacy efforts and media campaigns led by feminist organizations.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action to End Violence Against Women (ACT) programme, a partnership between the European Commission and UN Women as co-leaders of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence, is working to accelerate progress to end VAWG. Operating at global and regional levels, with an initial focus in Africa and Latin America, it is supporting and investing in strong and empowered feminist women's rights organizations at regional levels and in building coalitions with multiple stakeholders and actors from all sectors to strengthen regional advocacy to end VAWG.

<sup>[1]</sup> WHO (2021) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018.

<sup>[2]</sup> Mama Cash (July 2020) Feminist activism works! A review of the selected literature on the impact of feminist activism in the realization of women's rights. AWID (November 2020) Shifting More Money to Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Fund the

Feminist Movement. Htun, M and Weldon, S.L. (2012) The Civic Origins of Progressive Political Change: Addressing Violence Against Women from a Global Perspective, 1975-2005. American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 106, No. 3, August 2012

<sup>131</sup> Mary Ellsberg, Margarita Quintanilla et William J. Ugarte (2022) Pathways to change : Three decades of feminist research and activism to end violence against women in Nicaragua, Global Public Health, DOI : [10.1080/17441692.2022.2038652](https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2022.2038652)

To this end the ACT will establish a Civil Society Regional Network (CSRN) for the East and Southern Africa region (ESAR) as a convening mechanism to connect civil society experts across the region with information on ACT developments and to enable feedback from diverse women's rights advocates and human rights defenders to strengthen the programme's effectiveness in support of women's movements and increased advocacy and campaigning on EVAWG. The CSRN is an action-oriented network providing strategic insights and inputs at a regional level and contributing via selected representatives of the network to the Global ACT Civil Society Steering Committee towards contributing to the effective implementation of ACT. The CSRN in ESAR will bring together (virtually and where resources allow, in-person) WROs to build connectivity and solidarity across each region and to mobilize collective advocacy, support collective care and sustain the efforts of individual advocates and organizations working for EVAWG over time.

### **The Role of the CSRN**

The CSRN will comprise individuals representing diverse WROs working on ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in the East and Southern Africa region to advance and promote a shared advocacy agenda that will be taken forward throughout the duration of the programme (through August 2026) and beyond to increase momentum and amplify priorities of WROs to accelerate impact in EVAWG.

The CSRN will enable WROs working at a regional or sub-regional level to collaborate in defining and amplifying advocacy strategies and actions for EVAWG. The CSRN will also contribute recommendations to ensure strong participation of women and young women from different parts of the region and representing diverse groups of women and girls, and those working on intersectional issues have greater opportunities to be heard, to influence and shape regional/country laws and policies, processes, normative frameworks, resolutions, and outcome documents of key policy and decision-making. In this regard, the CSRN will have the following functions:

Areas of focus	Network task
Strategic Insight/Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review and provide inputs and recommendations on key issues/documents related the ACT programme, as relevant.</li> </ul>
Build Connectivity and Collective Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Serve as an interactive space and an open forum for dialogue/ learning/networking, planning, strategizing how the ACT programme can best advance the work of WROs.</li> <li>- Facilitate peer to peer exchanges amongst women’s right organizations to enable regional dialogue, learning, and strengthened capacities of members to participate in regional social monitoring and accountability mechanisms.</li> <li>- Foster solidarity through modeling and encouraging collaborative approaches to partnership, coalition building and networking of WROs.</li> <li>- Promote a culture of collective care between and among members to increase momentum to EAWG by sharing information on opportunities and recommendations for ACT to promote collective care across the Programme.</li> </ul>
Advocacy and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide other relevant information, analysis and lessons learned that can feed into ACT programming, including work with non-traditional actors around key advocacy priorities to amplify the voices of WROs.</li> <li>- Contribute to advocacy and communication activities, including in the dissemination of the ACT messages to the public, to bring on board multi-stakeholder partners and new actors to accelerate efforts to end violence against women and girls.</li> <li>- Collaborate to support activism and joint actions amongst members for increased advocacy and campaigning on EAWG.</li> <li>- Be a line of communication between the regional CSO network and the Global ACT Steering Committee for sharing lessons</li> </ul>

### **Frequency of meetings and engagement:**

- The CSRN will hold quarterly meetings virtually and bi-annual (physical meetings with selected representatives where necessary and if resources allow) for networking, knowledge sharing, collaboration, strategizing, and coalition building at the regional levels ensuring that EVAWG is positioned and prioritized. UN Women will act as a secretariat for the meetings and the working language for the meetings will be in English, with interpretation to be provided as feasible where required for member participation.
- The CSRN will hold ad-hoc virtual meetings as necessary and pertinent.
- UN Women will provide updates to the CSRN monthly, with information on opportunities to input into ACT Programme processes and other developments.
- A WhatsApp Group for members will also be made available for those interested.

### **Time requirements for CSRN Members**

- The CSRN contributions to the areas identified above will require approximately 2-3 hours of time a month.

### **Benefits of participation in the CSRN**

The opportunity to provide valuable advice and inform the ACT Programme's efforts to support coalition building around key advocacy priorities and movement strengthening for the benefit of women's and girls' rights. Members will have the opportunity to expand their networks and connections with women's rights groups in all their diversity and across different regions to contribute to more unified and cohesive global feminist movements working on EVAW. Two members of the CSRN (selected by the group) will have an added advantage to represent the region in the Global ACT Steering Committee.

### **Composition and Term Limit**

The CSRN will be composed of diverse women's rights activists and experts from women's rights organizations working on issues of EVAWG from the region, including those representing women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination, violence, and

marginalization. The group will have maximum of 50 members and will be selected based on following criteria, which were developed in collaboration with WROs.

- Individuals who are part of women's or young women's rights organizations, networks, or coalition organizations operating at a multi-country, sub-regional or regional level in East and Southern Africa (with connection to national Grassroots organizations/movements/networks).
- Individuals who have experience with gender equality and EVAWG programming/policy advocacy, with work on intersectional forms of discrimination a priority area of attention.

Members of the CSRN are involved in their personal capacity for a fixed period of 2 years (from September 2024- August 2026). After one year, members will be invited to reconfirm their interest and ability to remain on the ACT CSRN, and new members may be nominated and selected based on the selection criteria as needed.

#### **Process for joining ACT Civil Society Regional Network:**

To join the CSRN, interested individuals will complete the online survey by **3 September 2024**. Applications will be reviewed using the above-mentioned criteria by UN Women, in consultation with the ACT Steering Committee Members for East and Southern Arica, with consideration to the criteria above and having a diversity of EVAWG issues, geographic representation and perspectives in the network.

**Link for the survey-** <https://forms.microsoft.com/r/sp4yB4m8ie>

**For more information on the process please email-** [gertrude.chitika@unwomen.org](mailto:gertrude.chitika@unwomen.org).