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Terms of Reference

*Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to end Violence Against Women Programme
Civil Society Steering Committee*

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 eliminate VAWG, the prevalence has remained persistent.¹ 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-women's-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 human rights defenders.

Despite these worrying trends, there is more evidence than ever before that VAWG is preventable. Evidence demonstrates that the presence of a strong and autonomous feminist movement is the single most critical factor to drive policy change in ending violence against women and Girls (EVAWG) both in transnational contexts and in domestic policy making.² Research has also shown that large-scale reductions in VAWG are possible through multi-sectoral coordinated actions of governments and civil society, and intensive advocacy efforts and media campaigns carried out by feminist organizations.³

In this context, the European Union and UN Women have partnered to develop a new initiative called Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence Against Women. ACT is a new, game changing joint commitment between the European Commission and UN Women as co-leaders of the Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence (GBV). The ACT programme is focused on strengthening global and regional advocacy, coalition building and transformative feminist action to EVAW. ACT will be implemented over three years in two regions initially: Africa and Latin America, with a global component to accelerate impact and position the priorities of women's rights movements in global fora across a wide range of related issues.

It will build on the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's results and lessons learned in 26 countries to strengthen women's rights movements at the regional and global levels and to elevate women's rights advocacy

¹ WHO (2021) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018.

² Mama Cash (July 2020) Feminist Activism Works! A review of select literature on the impact of feminist activism in achieving women's rights. AWID (November 2020) Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movement. Htun, M & Weldon, S.L. (2012) The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005. American Political Science Review. Vol. 106, No. 3 August 2012

³ Mary Ellsberg, Margarita Quintanilla & 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)



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priorities in regional and global policy making and intergovernmental fora to build greater momentum globally in EVAW.

Its overall objective is to accelerate efforts to eliminate all forms of VAW, with two overarching objectives:

- To strengthen coalition building, networking, leadership, and resilience of global and regional feminist women's rights movements; *and*
- To increase and enhance advocacy, campaigning, policymaking on EVAW through multistakeholder partnerships and coalitions.

The ACT programme will achieve its results through direct investments in global and regional feminist women's rights organizations to strengthen their institutional capacities, resilience, coalition building, networking, and leadership. It will also coordinate and amplify a shared advocacy agenda that is designed in collaboration with women's rights organizations, bringing on board multi-stakeholder partners and new actors to accelerate efforts to end violence against women and girls. ACT will ensure strong connections and engagement with women's rights movements at the national level to ensure that global and regional level advocacy is informed by grassroots activists as well as to generate impact and results at the country level.

The ACT programme will leverage opportunities for meaningful engagement, consultation, co-creation, and collaboration with women's rights movements throughout the lifecycle of the programme. To this end a Global ACT Civil Society Steering Committee is being established for the ACT Programme as a mechanism to harness civil society expertise and to continuously ensure alignment of the programme with the strategic priorities and needs of women's rights organizations and women rights movements at global and regional level.

In order to ensure regional representation and alignment with the priorities of the current regions covered in the programme, the Global ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will be linked to the three Regional Civil Society Networks, which have been engaged as part of the regional consultations in Latin America, East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa that took place during the inception phase of the ACT Programme and were subsequently established as a Civil Society Network linked to the ACT programme in agreement with the participants.

Composition of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee

The ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will provide the opportunity for Civil Society Representatives to help shape the strategic direction and approach of the ACT Programme to ensure continuous alignment with the evolving needs and priorities of women's rights organizations.

The ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will be composed of 10-12 women's rights activists and experts from women's rights organizations working on issues of EVAWG from a diversity of perspectives, with attention to representation of experts working from an intersectional lens.

Six slots will be reserved for representatives of regional women's rights organizations included in the regional civil society networks of Latin America (2 members), East and Southern Africa (2 members) and



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West and Central Africa (2 members), which have been convened as part of the consultation process of the ACT Programme.

The remaining six slots will be open for representatives of grassroots, national, regional organizations, from across any regions globally, or global women's rights organizations, who would like to take part in the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee.

The ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will include a diversity of women's rights organizations, including those representing women and girls facing intersecting forms of discrimination, violence, and marginalization, as outlined in criteria below.

Selection Process and Criteria

UN Women will launch an announcement with details on how to apply or nominate representatives who would like to take part in the Global ACT Civil Society Steering Committee.

The Regional Civil Society Networks in Latin America, West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa convened under the ACT Programme, will be invited to self-nominate or nominate individuals from within their respective regional networks.

All nominations will be reviewed by a Selection Committee comprised of the EU, UN Women ACT Programme Team as well as Civil Society leaders. The selection Committee will select the final members based on the following selection criteria:

- 1) Must be women's rights activist and/or expert committed to the core values of the United Nations, with substantial experience in working on advancing gender equality and EVAW.
- 2) Existing membership in grassroots, national, regional or global women's rights organizations, coalitions or networks of civil society and grass-roots organizations, development and social policy think tanks or academia working on women's rights and intersecting issues. Members join the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee in their individual personal capacity and not as representatives of their respective women's rights organizations and/or other entity.⁴
- 3) Experience in feminist activism, women's rights movements and coalition building, and advocacy or campaigning for women's rights at global and/or regional, national or grassroots level, to influence policy making.
- 4) Knowledge of and/or experience with global and regional women's rights frameworks, standards and accountability mechanisms is a strong asset.
- 5) Ensuring diversity and intersectionality within the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will be a key consideration to ensure representation including of women in all their diversity, including those facing intersecting forms of discrimination and violence, such as young women, afrodescendent and indigenous women, women from marginalized grassroots communities, ethnic and religious groups, LGBTIQ+ individuals, migrant women, women affected by crises and displacement, women living in rural settings, domestic workers, adolescents, women living with HIV and AIDS, and women with disabilities.

⁴ Membership of individuals in the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee does not prevent organizations they are affiliated with from applying to become UN Women programme partners.



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- 6) Experience in working on women's rights and forming coalitions or partnerships with non-traditional partners/actors across different sectors is an asset.
- 7) Members of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will not have any political affiliations with political parties or governments.
- 8) Ensuring regional/geographical representation within the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will also be a key consideration.

Roles and Responsibilities

The ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will provide a dynamic space for innovative ideas, advocacy, and policy perspectives to assist in achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the ACT Programme and will have the following overall roles and responsibilities:

- Ensure that the ACT Programme stays on the pulse of global and regional women's rights movements, and that the evolving needs and priorities of women's rights organizations are incorporated into the actions of the ACT programme within the two objectives of: 1) strengthening coalition building, networking, leadership, and resilience of global and regional feminist women's rights movements; and 2) increasing and enhancing advocacy, campaigning, policymaking on EVAW through multistakeholder partnerships and coalitions.
- Advise on the overall strategic direction of the ACT programme throughout the programme lifecycle including based on evolving advocacy priorities and to sharpen ideas and strategies of advocacy initiatives and transformative feminist actions.
- Provide recommendations to the ACT Management Committee⁵ in case of any needed strategic adjustments or realignments within the programme throughout the programme lifecycle. Four representatives of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will also be members of the ACT Management Committee on a rotational basis. These members will, among others, consolidate and raise the recommendations of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee during ACT Management Committee.
- One member of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will also act as an observer on the Spotlight Civil Society Reference Group, on a rotational basis, to ensure building on lessons learned from the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative, and to create a platform for continuous exchange and alignment of advocacy messages between the Spotlight Civil Society Reference Group and the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee.
- Advocate and partner to ensure the goals and objectives of the programme are achieved, including supporting the programmes advocacy priorities in relevant global decision-making spaces to develop solidarity strategies and opportunities in global and regional policy spaces, and to advance action for ending violence against women in coordination with other relevant Civil Society Steering Committee /Advisory/Reference groups.
- Provide inputs on how the ACT Programme can ensure the systematic and meaningful engagement of global and regional women's rights groups and relevant civil society organisations,

⁵ The ACT Programme will be coordinated and overseen through an ACT Management Committee which will be co-chaired by UN Women and the EC and will provide high-level strategic oversight and guidance for the implementation of the Action and its objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities to ensure that the programme is on track, to identify and unblock any bottlenecks or challenges in the implementation to ensure that the overall impact and results are achieved. The ACT Management Committee will be comprised of The EC DG INTPA, UN Women and Four Women's Rights Organization representatives.



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including those representing youth and groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination, drawing upon their diverse expertise, experience, outreach and knowledge.

- Members of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee may belong to organizations that are implementing partners of UN Women. To avoid conflict of interest the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee does not have any oversight, monitoring or decision-making role in the ACT Programming activities. It also does not implement or participate directly in the implementation of the ACT Programme activities.

Coordination Mechanisms and Frequency of Meetings

UN Women will convene virtual bi-annual meetings with the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee to ensure systematic collaboration and to jointly identify mechanisms for ensuring meaningful engagement of Civil Society throughout the duration of the ACT Programme. Additional meetings may take place on an ad-hoc basis, as needed as agreed with ACT Civil Society Steering Committee members.

UN Women ACT management team will facilitate the organization of meetings and carry out the notetaking. The date and time of meetings will be agreed upon in advance with the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee members. Interpretation will be provided in English/Spanish/French during the virtual bi-annual meetings according to the needs of the members. The ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will select a Chair for each meeting to facilitate the discussion and consensus building during meetings.

The regionally nominated members of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will coordinate and engage with the ACT Regional Civil Society Networks of Latin America, East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa to facilitate a streamlined approach to generating collective advice for the ACT Programme, and ensure strong connection and linkages with regional needs, priorities and strategies.

Term Limit

Members may take part in the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee in their personal capacity for a fixed period of for the duration of the programme, ending in September 2026. On a yearly basis, an assessment of members continued interest and ability to remain on the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee will be carried out and new members may be nominated and selected on the basis of the selection criteria as needed.

Compensation

Remuneration will not be provided for participation in the virtual meetings of the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee, but remuneration will be provided for specific concrete and time-bound deliverables/activities related to the ACT Civil Society Steering Committee.