Feminist Humanitarian Network

**Terms of Reference:** Defining process, approach and requirements for the Feminist Humanitarian Network to become an independent entity

**Overview:**
The objective of this consultancy is to undertake a detailed scoping exercise to equip the Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) with a roadmap to becoming an independent entity. The output of this exercise will be a report that the FHN Steering Committee can refer to in its decision-making in determining its steps towards registering and operating independently. Taking into account the FHN’s feminist approach and commitments, the report will include researched considerations, including: where and how to register (which countries are options); basic independent operating requirements, including financing and tax requirements, that will ensure the FHN is sustainable in the long term. The report will include a series of recommendations that should include recommended timeline options, recognising the ambition of the FHN to register and operate independently as soon as possible, as well as its understanding that what is involved in becoming and being independent may require some time and dedicated funding.

**Audience:** The FHN Steering Committee (SC), who will share findings with the wider FHN membership.

**Reports to:** The FHN SC, with key contact via the FHN Lead (Holly Miller)

**Duration:** 10-15 days

**Timeframe:** January 2022 – May 2022

**Reporting schedule:**

*Please note that the timeline below is indicative, and a final timeline will be agreed with the consultant.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 March</td>
<td>First draft report due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 March – 7 April</td>
<td>FHN review of first draft report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>Semi-final report due (with review response sheet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April – 23 May</td>
<td>FHN review of semi-final report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 May</td>
<td>Final report due (with review response sheet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Location:** Virtual

**Background:**
The Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) is a global member-based network of women’s rights organisations in the Global South, international non-government organisations (INGOs), and individuals working to transform the humanitarian system into one that is guided by feminist principles. The FHN is not yet a registered charity or constituted organisation, and it is therefore hosted by ActionAid International, who hold the FHN’s accounts, manages its finances, is the legal owner of intellectual property rights, enters into contracts on behalf of the FHN, and employs FHN Secretariat staff. As the host and a member of the FHN, ActionAid’s support to the FHN includes (but is not limited to) providing organisational development, legal and governance support, business operations, fundraising and grant management for the network and supporting its advocacy and communications work. The Feminist Humanitarian Network and its members, including ActionAid, are committed to the FHN becoming an independently registered entity in the fullness of time.
About the Feminist Humanitarian Network:
The Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) is a global network of women leaders working together to transform the humanitarian system into one that is guided by feminist principles. The FHN was established by feminists working in humanitarian action that recognised the deeply patriarchal and colonial ways in which the humanitarian system works, and the need for system change to ensure the agency and amplify the voices of women in emergencies.

The FHN is a member-based network of grassroots, local, and national WROs working in the Global South; regional networks; international NGOs; and individuals. 70% of the FHN’s organisational members are WROs – INGO membership is limited to 30%.

Objectives:
1. To define legal, governance, and financial considerations for the FHN in its steps towards becoming an independent entity.
2. To develop recommendations and options to inform the FHN’s decision-making and planning with regard to becoming an independent entity.

Staged outputs:
1. An initial presentation of findings to the FHN Steering Committee, presenting the SC with an opportunity to ask questions and provide additional guidance and direction to inform the final report.
2. A 10-15 page semi-final report (excluding Annexes), that summarises the key findings and includes: sections on options for registration and legal requirements; governance structures and requirements; management and staffing requirements based on the FHN’s current approach and ways of working; financing, fundraising and sustainability; and key recommendations that include: steps to be taken towards registering independently, including foundational steps to be taken in the immediate or near future; options with regard to timeline for registration; options with regard to location of registration. Annexes should cover ToR, review itinerary, data collection tools, list of people interviewed; and list of documents.
3. A power point based, virtual presentation of the semi-final report to the SC for feedback.
4. A final report, taking into account feedback from the SC, in the format outlined above.

*The approach should include check-points throughout the process with one or two members of the FHN Steering Committee, to share progress and provide feedback to ensure the consultancy is on track.

Guiding questions:
- What are the key considerations with regards to in what form and where the FHN should register? What are the benefits and challenges of different types of organisational models and registering in different countries?
- What should the FHN have in place to ensure it is fully equipped to operate independently? What legal, statutory and financial requirements are there? What governance structures, processes, and systems should be in place? What management and staffing requirements are needed to support appropriate governance mechanisms?
- What should the FHN have in place to ensure it is equipped to fundraise independently? Are there specific staffing considerations based on donor requirements?
- What should the FHN consider in becoming independent from a feminist perspective?
- Given the steps required to become independent and the foundational operating requirements, what are the feasible timeline options for becoming independent?
- How are ongoing debates within the sector (and beyond it) – for example, around issues of decolonisation and anti-racism reflected in our current structures, and how should we reflect them in the structures we would have in place as an independent entity?
- In what instances have networks or organisations remained hosted? Why and under what conditions? What type of “hybrid” form of independent organisation could be considered (wherein a hosted entity is less entwined with its host)? If so, what does/could this entail?

Methodology:
- Review the FHN’s key documents that define its strategy and its feminist approach.
● Review key documents with regards to the current hosting arrangements/ActionAid International as the current host.
● Undertake a desk review of other similar organisations/networks (ideally a mix of hosted, newly independent, and independent entities) and how they are set up. If possible, this should include their governance systems and staffing, how they are funded and manage funding, the process through which they became independent or not.
● Interviews/discussions with key leaders of the FHN, from the Steering Committee, the Membership Committee, the FHN Secretariat and ActionAid International as the current host.
● Interviews/discussions with other feminist/humanitarian networks that have become independent as well as those that have not.
● Analyse and document the evolving context that the FHN operates in and the impacts it might have for the Network – both in terms of humanitarian crises and increasing limitation on freedom of movement, as well as changes in the humanitarian sector – recognising that organisations are going through transitions and change processes for a variety of reasons.

Experience/skills of consultant/s:

**Essential**

Extensive experience in and commitment to feminist values and ways of working.

● Demonstrated understanding of and experience with assessing different organisational models, legal frameworks and requirements for independent, global non-for profit entities.
● Experience in the humanitarian/development sector, ideally with organisations/entities working to advance women’s rights.
● Extensive experience of the humanitarian system and its global architecture.
● Demonstrated experience in and global knowledge of the governance structures of international networks/organisations, and of registration requirements across countries.
● Experience of leading/delivering organisational development processes at governance level.
● Consultancy groups bringing together different expertise are encouraged to apply based on a lead consultant model.
● Applications from previously contracted employees of FHN members will be accepted though the selection panel will be alert to potential conflicts of interest.

**Expression of Interest**

Expressions of interest should include:

● A clearly written proposal written in English of no more than 5 pages long (budget may be separate). Proposals should include:
  ● Consultant / Consultant(s) suitability as per the required experience and in line with the ToR, including copy of CV of the consultant(s) who will undertake the review.
  ● Review plan including approach, expected challenges that might arise and how you plan to overcome these to deliver on the ToR.
  ● A proposed workplan with milestones for the period of work, including presentation and review times for the draft report, semi-final report and final report.
  ● Financial proposal in USD broken down per the workplan and different members of the team (as applicable), detailing consultant(s) itemized fees, data collection and administrative costs.
  ● Samples of previous relevant work written by the applicant(s). If joint authored, please include a description of the role of the named consultant in the report.
  ● Contact details of three independent referees.

The submission deadline is 23.59 South African Standard Time (GMT+2) on Friday 14 January 2022. Please submit proposals to Thabani.Moyo@actionaid.org with ‘FHN Independence Review EoI’ in the email subject line.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing your proposal!
Annex 1:

Feminist Humanitarian Network

Strategy
2020 - 2025

Table of Contents

Context ........................................................................................................................................... 4
The Feminist Humanitarian Network: who we are ................................................................. 5
FHN 2020 strategy: Background and overview ................................................................... 6
The feminist change we seek in the humanitarian system .................................................... 7
   Vision and Goal ....................................................................................................................... 7
   Strategic objectives ............................................................................................................. 7
   Key definitions .................................................................................................................... 8
How we work: Achieving change with a feminist approach ...................................................... 9
   Our Commitments ............................................................................................................. 9
   Membership ..................................................................................................................... 10
   Network structure and leadership .................................................................................... 10
   FHN Secretariat ............................................................................................................... 11
   Decision-making, learning, reflection, and planning ......................................................... 11
   Our role ............................................................................................................................ 13

Context

Crises disproportionately impact women and girls, aggravating pre-existing gender inequalities, and negating the access women and girls have to their rights.
Worldwide, women’s rights organizations (WROs) working at grassroots, local, and national levels in the Global South advance and protect women’s rights through organizing, advocacy and campaigns, and essential service delivery, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and the provision of shelters and safe spaces.

When an emergency strikes, women and their organisations are often the first to respond, playing leadership roles in their communities to ensure ongoing access to basic rights for women, in all of their diversity, and for “marginalised” groups, ensuring nobody is left behind. Yet when the humanitarian machinery kicks in, WROs’ roles are undermined and their voices ignored. They are excluded from funding opportunities and from decision-making bodies and processes, and there is little accountability to them.

WROs are forced to use the limited resources they have available to them to respond to the emergency, compromising their long-term sustainability. The basic needs and rights of the women they work with are often overlooked.

To ensure that WROs’, their humanitarian efforts, and their roles providing critical services and driving the advancement of women’s rights at grassroots and national levels are not undermined in emergencies, it is critical to transform the global humanitarian system into one that is guided by feminist principles. Feminist principles and ways of working includes being committed to women’s rights and gender equality; being intersectional, inclusive, holistic, collective, and collaborative; ensuring safety and safe spaces, accountability and transparency; and, critically, recognizing unequal power dynamics and taking action to address them and shift power where necessary.

Donors and other humanitarian actors have committed to advancing gender equality and supporting women’s leadership through the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the World Humanitarian Summit (and commitments to the Grand Bargain), under the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, at the Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises, and most recently the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact. The commitments are there, but sufficient action has not been realized.

Climate change, increasing conflicts, urbanization, and a growing population are all contributing to a rise in emergencies, which are affecting more people across the world than ever before. This means that responding to crises within communities around the world is an everyday reality: “the new normal”, not an exceptional moment.

The humanitarian system must be transformed.
The Feminist Humanitarian Network is a global collective of women leaders working together to transform the humanitarian system into one that is guided by feminist principles. We are member based, comprised of grassroots, local, and national women’s rights organisations; national and regional women’s networks; international NGOs and organisations headquartered in the Global North; academic organisations; funding institutions; and individuals.

Our membership is comprised of WROs from the Pacific, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, that represent women in all their diversity: refugee women, women from host communities, single women, widows, women with disabilities, survivors of conflict, LGBTQIA+ communities, amongst others.

Our approach recognises, critically, that most WROs do not identify primarily as ‘humanitarian organisations’ – that they have different operational focus areas (such as maternal and newborn child health, sexual and reproductive health, the provision of legal assistance, agriculture and livelihoods, and so forth). However, in a crisis, WROs shift their focus to the emergency, ensuring services remain available, and using their relationships with communities and the networks they have established to provide tailored and speedy relief and assistance. Our membership is comprised of WROs with expertise across a wide spectrum of service-provision and campaigning focus areas. Similarly, our INGO members have different thematic specialisations.

We are committed to ensuring the voices of women’s rights organisations working at grassroots, local, and national levels are heard in international advocacy spaces and more publicly, and to supporting these organisations to drive change within the humanitarian system.

The Network facilitates space for women leaders to share the challenges they experience with the humanitarian system and to collectively define solutions to them. We work collectively and use the power that working as a network brings – strength in numbers, broad networks, and diverse skillsets and leadership – to achieve our objectives and in so doing, transform the humanitarian system into one that is accessible to and led by women and their organisations, and leaves nobody behind.

FHN 2020 strategy: Background and overview

This strategy has been developed collectively by the members of the Feminist Humanitarian Network. It is the product of numerous meetings and thought pieces, including a series of strategic workshops facilitated by different members over a six-week period in 2020. Like all FHN meetings, these workshops were safe spaces, wherein members debated, created, and visualised together the change that we want to see in the humanitarian system.

This document builds on an original concept developed by members at a face-to-face members’ meeting at the Commission of the Status of Women in March 2019, and includes work that has been done by the FHN’s strategic and steering committees
following on from this meeting – work more clearly defining the FHN’s structure and ways of working.

The FHN’s strategy defines our vision, goal, objectives, and definitions (section 1). It lays out how we work: our feminist modalities and commitments, our structures, top-line decision-making, reflection and planning processes (section 2). The FHN Strategy underpins a suite of additional strategies and documents that define its activity plans and ways of working. These include (but are not limited to):

- FHN Advocacy Strategy
- FHN Communications Strategy
- FHN Fundraising Strategy
- FHN Funding & Fundraising Approach
- FHN Membership Principles
- FHN Membership Policy
- FHN International Member Guidelines

The FHN strategy is reviewed through biennial collective strategic review processes, to ensure that the FHN is responding to shifts in the humanitarian system and in the political spheres beyond it. The next strategic review will be undertaken mid 2022.

2. The feminist change we seek in the humanitarian system

Vision and Goal

Vision

A global humanitarian system that is responsive, accountable and accessible to women and their organisations, in all their diversity; that challenges, rather than perpetuates, structural inequalities.

Goal

To strengthen the agency and amplify the voices of women and their organisations in crises.

Strategic objectives

To achieve our vision of a feminist humanitarian system, our focus is on achieving the following objectives:
1. To support women’s rights actors and movements leading humanitarian action in the Global South, to ensure their expertise and efforts are recognised and resourced by the humanitarian system.

2. To convene women and their organisations to collectively build feminist leadership, and share evidence and learning to transform the roles of women in humanitarian spaces.

3. To offer governments and other stakeholders alternative, feminist ways of working, that would achieve our vision of a feminist humanitarian system.

4. To identify and challenge patriarchal practices that are barriers to women’s leadership, decision making, and meaningful engagement in humanitarian action and in the humanitarian system.

5. To mobilise collective action at critical moments, to demand that women’s leadership is recognised, and to ensure that women’s rights organisations are included in decision making spaces that influence the humanitarian system.

Key definitions

How we define the term ‘feminist’:

- Being intersectional, inclusive, holistic, collaborative, and committed.
- Putting women (all self-identifying women) at the centre.
- Ensuring women’s dignity, driving transformation, dismantling patriarchy, and challenging exclusion.
- Leaving no-one behind, ensuring safety and safe spaces, and accountability and transparency.
- Recognising power dynamics, and taking action to address them, to shift power where necessary, and always using power responsibly.
- Being self-reflective, and open to adapting and changing, to ensure feminist principles are consistently upheld.
- Working together as a movement for women’s rights, for human rights, and justice for all.

Our definition of a feminist humanitarian system is one that:

- Is collectively and unwaveringly committed to achieving gender equality, recognising and responding to the systemic drivers of inequality, and using emergencies as catalysts to advance women and girls’ rights

- Acknowledges the patriarchal and colonial dynamics within itself, that often exclude or downplay the contribution of those identifying as women and minorities, particularly those from the Global South
• Takes responsibility for identifying unjust formal and informal power relations within itself by regularly critiquing the extent to which its structures and processes reinforce patriarchal power relations through humanitarian action.

• Actively shifts power to women-led organisations working in humanitarian contexts in the Global South by ensuring that they are resourced and consistently included, and that their leadership is recognised and made central in shaping the humanitarian system.

• Facilitates safe spaces through its coordination mechanisms, wherein actors working at all levels can be heard, and the expertise of diverse responders, including those identifying as women, is looked up to.

• Recognises that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, thereby ensuring that nobody is left behind.

2. How we work: Achieving change with a feminist approach

The Feminist Humanitarian Network is committed to upholding feminist ways of working amongst its members. Feminist principles define how the FHN is structured, its planning and decision-making processes, and the way that meetings are managed and discussions engaged in. Just as the FHN is committed to transforming power dynamics in the humanitarian system, so too are we committed to recognising and addressing power dynamics within our Network.

Included in the feminist principles that inform the FHN’s ways of working are: collective feminist leadership (including using non-competitive approaches); active recognition of and response to power dynamics within the network and beyond it, and pro-active, considered redistribution of power as required; constant and consistent accountability and transparency; ensuring safe spaces (as defined collectively); and regular reflection on approaches and work to ensure accountability to ourselves as a collective body and to each other as members, and the strengthening of our feminist practise.

Members are asked to make the following commitments when they become part of the FHN. They are commitments each member is expected to uphold, and that the FHN must uphold as a collective.

Our Commitments

• To value women’s rights, contributions, lived experiences, and solutions as feminist alternatives to disrupt the humanitarian system.

• To create a safe and inclusive environment where the autonomy, identity, and diversity of all members, is respected and acknowledged.
• To work within the Network according to feminist principles, and be conscious of power dynamics, working to transform power relationships, including funding.
• To be accountable to other members and to the women we are supporting through our collective and decisive actions.
• To recognise the collective power of the Feminist Humanitarian Network to provide sustainable solutions for global justice.

Membership

Women’s rights organisations from the Global South lead the FHN, and international organisations use their privilege to support this leadership in a variety of ways, including ensuring access for local actors to global decision-making spaces within the humanitarian system.

In line with its commitment to acknowledging and addressing power disparities between its members, the FHN is committed to maintaining a membership with at least 70% representation by women’s rights organisations working at grassroots, local and national levels in the Global South and no more than 30% representation of international organisations and institutions.

All organisational members must align with the FHN’s membership principles, including being women’s organisations, or women-led organisations (wherein Board and management are women).

Network structure and leadership

To uphold its commitment to collective leadership, the FHN’s work is driven by four strategic committees, each of which works to implement its own strategy, which has been developed and agreed in consultation with the wider FHN membership, and seeks to achieve the network’s overarching strategic commitments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Committee</td>
<td>Development and implementation of the FHN advocacy strategy, and leadership of advocacy work with the guidance of the wider membership, and specifically WRO members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Committee</td>
<td>Leadership of membership recruitment processes, review of membership applications, and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee</td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Committee</td>
<td>Development and implementation of the FHN communications strategy, review and sign off on communications messages and content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Committee</td>
<td>Development and implementation of the FHN fundraising strategy, fundraising tools, and identification of funding opportunities and leadership of approaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FHN is governed by a Steering Committee, responsible for oversight of the FHN. The Committee reflects the 70/30 ratio that the FHN is committed to, and at its full complement, is comprised of 13 members, with representation across all regions. It is elected by the wider membership.

Each Committee meets regularly throughout the year (every six weeks), and updates and seeks the input of the wider membership at regular member-wide meetings (every two-three months, contingent on the regularity of other collective events, such as learning sessions and external events).

**FHN Secretariat**

The FHN and its Committees is coordinated by a Secretariat, which is currently hosted by ActionAid and led by the FHN Lead (currently the FHN’s single staff member).

The FHN Secretariat drives the FHN’s workplans and operations in close consultation with members. It is responsible for ensuring that the FHN implements and revises its strategies, and plays the primary role in implementing activities that are agreed upon by committees and the wider membership in workplans and on a case-by-case basis, across fundraising, advocacy, and communications. The Secretariat is responsible for designing and maintaining the FHN's administrative systems, such as member databases, filing systems, etc. The Secretariat is the key coordination point within the FHN, and represents it as required, and facilitates links between its members and external parties where appropriate.

**Decision-making, learning, reflection, and planning**

**Decision-making**

All major FHN decisions are made collectively, and the Network’s structures and decision-making processes have been put in place to ensure this approach is upheld.
on an ongoing basis. Decisions that pertain to the FHN’s approaches or work in a strategic area are made by the Committee that is responsible for that area of work. Each Committee is responsible for ensuring it includes the wider membership in decision-making, and for designing processes to ensure this is done meaningfully and effectively.

The FHN Steering Committee is responsible for making decisions pertaining to the FHN’s overall strategy and approach. Strategic Committees work alongside the Steering Committee to ensure that all FHN work is aligned with the FHN’s feminist principles, and to ensure that all committees are up to date on the work of others.

**Learning and reflection**

A core element of the FHN’s feminist approach is to reflect regularly and consistently, to ensure that the FHN is accountable as a collective, that its Secretariat is accountable to members, and that its members are accountable to each other. Reflection is critical to ensure that the FHN is consistently strengthening its feminist approach. The FHN creates space in as many meetings as possible to reflect on the processes it uses to make decisions and achieve its objectives, on the safety of the spaces it facilitates, and on the extent to which power dynamics within the Network are acknowledged and addressed. The FHN Secretariat also uses tools (such as surveys) to seek member feedback.

**Annual learning, reflection, and planning**

The FHN undertakes annual planning processes to determine its yearly priorities and activities, aligned with this strategy and with its Advocacy, Communications, and Fundraising Strategies. Annual planning is undertaken at the same time as yearly reflection processes, to ensure that plans take into account key learnings from the FHN’s ongoing work.

Each year, the FHN distributes a survey to its members, seeking their feedback and reflections, as well as their ideas to strengthen the FHN’s feminist ways of working, and to define priorities activities. A work plan is then drafted, and then finalised by FHN members collectively at an annual member-wide planning and reflection meeting.

Annual workplans include activities that are aimed at strengthening the feminist approaches of the FHN, as well as achieving our strategic objectives. Once finalised, activities defined in workplans are distributed to the relevant FHN body to achieve (to committees or to the Secretariat).
Our role

As the Feminist Humanitarian Network, our role is to facilitate space to exchange experiences, to learn from and support each other.

It is to transform the humanitarian system so that we have a place at the decision-making tables where the voices of women working on the frontlines currently go unheard.

It is to dismantle patriarchal practices in humanitarian action, and to critique and challenge the tools that are used by the sector that reinforce patriarchal principles through sharing experiences and learning, and collective advocacy.

It is to claim spaces that we, as women, and as women’s rights organisations in the Global South, have never been before.

It is to act as a hive mind – a resource as well as a support mechanism, where members (both organisations and individuals) can seek support from each other, and can act individually and collectively.

It is to continue to push for women’s leadership at the global level on humanitarian issues – to ensure women are represented in the humanitarian system.

As the Feminist Humanitarian Network, we are grounded in the experiences of our members working on the frontlines of crises. We work to transform humanitarian interventions at national and at all levels.

Our mandate is to build solidarity and shift power. We are made up of diverse members working together with one voice. Together, we are powerful. Amongst us there is not an individual standing tall – we are a collective, strengthening each other through collective power and action.

We support each other professionally and emotionally. We check in with each other. We have built a unique and safe space, enabled by our feminist principles, and consequently, we have trust – in our space and in each other.