TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING PARTNER (ISP) – FAWE ZAMBIA

Application Deadline: 5pm EAT on 23rd November 2026

1.0 About FAWE

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is a pan-African non-governmental organisation founded in 1992, dedicated to promoting girls' and women's education in sub-Saharan Africa in alignment with the Education for All goals. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, FAWE operates through a network of 34 National Chapters in 33 countries. FAWE's mission is to advance gender equity and equality in education by fostering positive policies, practices and attitudes toward girls' education.

FAWE Zambia (FAWEZA), established in 1996, is one of FAWE's National Chapters, with operations across all ten provinces of Zambia. FAWEZA contributes to the achievement of FAWE's strategic objectives through the implementation of programmes aimed at advancing girls' and women's access to, retention in and completion of quality education, while promoting gender-responsive education systems.

2.0 Context of the Assignment

The FAWE Regional Secretariat (FAWERS) commissioned an assessment of all 10 National Chapters implementing the Second Chance Pathways Programme, which highlighted strengths and areas for focused attention. These included policy standardisation, risk management practices, internal audit functions, financial controls, procedures and compliance, and governance effectiveness. An action plan was developed for each Chapter, which is guiding FAWE in its operational approach to overall programme implementation, including several programmes with the Mastercard Foundation.

FAWERS seeks to engage an Institutional Strengthening Partner (ISP) in Zambia to support the Chapter to enhance its effectiveness, sustainability and regional impact, with priority focus on governance and leadership, compliance and accountability, financial and operational systems, risk management, internal controls and audit readiness, MEAL, programme quality and safeguarding, sustainability and portfolio diversification, and staff and leadership capacity strengthening.

3.0 Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to strengthen FAWE Zambia's institutional capacity to effectively deliver its strategic objectives, improve programme outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability of the Chapter.

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the assignment are to support the FAWE Zambia Chapter to:

1. Strengthen governance, leadership, compliance and accountability systems, including delegation of authority and coordination and alignment between FAWE Zambia and the FAWE Regional Secretariat.
2. Improve financial, human resources, procurement, risk management, internal control and audit readiness systems, including ERP uptake, to enhance operational effectiveness and sustainability.

3. Enhance programme quality, safeguarding, MEAL systems, and staff and leadership capacities, to support effective delivery, learning and continuous improvement.
4. Strengthen organisational sustainability by diversifying the partnership and funding portfolio, enhancing the resource mobilisation strategy and related capacities, and embedding FAWE models and interventions in institutional processes, supported by documentation approaches that ensure continuity.

5.0 Scope of Work

The Institutional Strengthening Partner (ISP) will support the implementation of the capacity strengthening plan developed for the FAWE Zambia Chapter by undertaking sufficient and appropriate activities to address identified institutional capacity gaps and strengthen organisational systems and practices. In carrying out this assignment, the ISP will build on FAWE's existing institutional strengthening efforts, review relevant policies, procedures and organisational processes, and develop a detailed workplan aligned with the recommendations and action plan arising from the institutional assessment. The ISP will also conduct the necessary tests, verifications, document reviews and field visits, where appropriate, to validate findings, support implementation of the workplan, and facilitate achievement of the capacity strengthening objectives.

5.1 Institutional Capacity Assessment

i. Identify capacity gaps and priority areas for strengthening through the previously completed assessment by consultant in 2025, and existing organisational capacity assessment conducted by FAWE RS, covering governance, leadership, systems, financial management, programme quality and partnerships.
ii. Provide recommendations and capacity building to address the identified capacity gaps for stronger, sustainable institutional systems.

5.2 Institutional Strengthening Strategy

i. Develop a comprehensive Institutional Strengthening Plan aligned with FAWEZA's strategic plan, with clear priorities, timelines, measurable indicators and an implementation workplan.
ii. Analyse FAWE Zambia's policy framework and propose a prioritised list of policies, procedures and governance instruments for review, updating or development, such as governance, risk management and business continuity, programme and grants management, partnerships and resource mobilisation, finance, procurement, ethics and compliance, data protection and records management, knowledge management and communications. Develop or update the agreed priority policies in consultation with the Chapter, leveraging FAWE Regional Secretariat guidelines.
iii. Strengthen internal controls, compliance mechanisms, operational efficiency and documentation systems to support effective implementation and accountability.

5.3 Governance and Leadership Strengthening

i. Review and strengthen governance structures, frameworks and processes to enhance accountability, transparency, compliance and effective decision-making at the Chapter level.

ii. Strengthen Board effectiveness by clarifying governance roles and responsibilities, enhancing oversight and strategic stewardship functions, and supporting Board capacity development where required.

iii. Develop the delegation of authority matrix and the related constitutional amendment, in consultation with the Board, FAWEZA management and FAWE Regional Secretariat, and support its presentation to members for adoption at the FAWEZA General Assembly.

iv. Enhance organisational leadership and management practices by strengthening strategic planning, performance management, decision-making, risk management and leadership capabilities to improve institutional effectiveness and sustainability.

5.4 Financial Systems, ERP and Audit

i. Evaluate the Chapter's migration to the ERP system and support the development of strategies for faster uptake of the modules, in coordination with the FAWE Regional Secretariat.

ii. Review audit processes and management letters, advise on the resolution of any pending issues, and advise on audit arrangements, including audit firm selection and interim audit processes.

5.5 Procurement

i. Evaluate the efficiency of the procurement committee and recommend ways of strengthening procurement processes.

5.6 MEAL Systems Enhancement

i. Review and strengthen MEAL systems, frameworks, policies and processes, including an organisation-wide MEAL framework, to ensure effective monitoring of programme performance, measurement of results, accountability to stakeholders and continuous learning.

ii. Strengthen results-based management and foster a culture of learning and adaptation by supporting the use of evidence, reflection, knowledge management and learning practices to inform strategic and programmatic decision-making.

5.7 Programme Quality Improvement

i. Review programme design, delivery and reporting standards and share recommendations to improve quality, consistency and effectiveness.

ii. Review programme implementation processes and the institutionalisation of FAWE models and interventions with partner institutions.

iii. Evaluate the approach taken in implementing the GCE component and advise on avenues for sustainability.

5.8 Sustainability, Partnerships and Portfolio Diversification

i. Review the Chapter's current funding and partnership portfolio and its existing resource mobilisation strategy, identifying risks, and opportunities across partner types, including government, private sector, foundations and institutions.

ii. Develop a sustainability plan aligned with the Institutional Strengthening Plan, covering own-source income, reserves, cost recovery and partnerships, and avenues for sustaining programme approaches beyond the programme period.

iii. Support the institutionalisation of FAWE models and interventions, so that they form part of partner institutions' own processes and practices, and put in place documentation approaches (tools, case documentation, evidence of results, lessons learned and handover guides) that support this and ensure continuity.

iv. Strengthen staff and leadership capacity in partnership development, proposal writing and partner intelligence through training and mentoring.

5.9 Capacity Building and Mentorship

i. Design and deliver tailored capacity-building programmes for staff, leadership and Board members based on identified organisational needs, including partnership development, proposal writing and documentation practices.

ii. Develop sustainable internal capacity and knowledge-sharing mechanisms to support continuous learning and long-term organisational growth.

5.10 Compliance Assessment

i. Conduct a comprehensive compliance assessment of the FAWE Zambia Chapter.

ii. Assess compliance with donor requirements, applicable national laws, and internal policies and procedures.

iii. Identify compliance gaps, risks and priority areas for improvement, and recommend corrective actions.

5.11 Risk Management Framework

i. Develop or strengthen an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework aligned with organisational objectives.

ii. Develop and maintain a risk register, including risk ratings, mitigation measures and monitoring mechanisms.

iii. Support the definition of risk appetite and tolerance levels to guide risk-informed decision-making.

iv. Strengthen risk monitoring and reporting processes to enhance organisational resilience and accountability.

6.0 Deliverables

The Institutional Strengthening Partner will deliver:

i. Inception report with detailed methodology and work plan.

ii. Institutional Capacity Assessment Report.

iii. Reviewed and updated Institutional Strategy and Action Plan.

iv. Policy analysis with a prioritised list, and reviewed and updated policies, procedures, tools and systems.

v. Delegation of authority matrix and constitutional amendment proposal for adoption by members.

vi. ERP assessment and uptake plan.

vii. Audit and procurement review report, covering audit processes, management letters, interim audits and the procurement committee.

viii. Programme implementation review report, including the institutionalisation of FAWE models and the evaluation of the GCE approach, with options for sustainability.

ix. Organisation-wide MEAL framework.

x. Enhanced resource mobilisation and partnership strategy, and sustainability plan.

xi. Documentation approach and tools for embedding FAWE models and interventions in institutional processes.

xii. Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework and Risk Management Policy, comprehensive risk assessment report, risk register with mitigation and monitoring measures, and risk appetite and tolerance statement.

xiii. Training materials and capacity-building reports as well as training of staff, management and Board members as applicable.

xiv. Periodic progress reports (monthly).

xv. Final report documenting achievements, lessons learned and recommendations.

7.0 Duration

i. Duration: 6 months, starting in mid-December 2026 (tentatively 15 December 2026) to 15 June 2027.

8.0 Reporting and Coordination

i. Overall, the Institutional Strengthening Partner will report to the Executive Director, FAWE Africa, Regional Secretariat, with a close working relationship with the FAWE Zambia Executive Director.

ii. The FAWE RS Deputy Executive Director and Head of Programmes, the Finance and Administration Director, Senior Program Officer, the FAWE Zambia Programme Manager, Finance and MEAL teams and other relevant staff will provide technical input for smooth coordination of the assignment.

iii. RS will facilitate periodic meetings between FAWE Zambia, the ISP and the Mastercard Foundation.

9.0 Qualification of the Firm

i. Demonstrate that the firm holds the requisite knowledge, skills and competencies required to perform its responsibilities with due professional care.

ii. The firm must have a minimum of 10 years' experience in institutional or organisational development.

iii. The firm must be registered and adhere to all legal requirements to operate in Zambia.

iv. The proposed team must include qualified experts who are able to conduct the assignment, including interviews, consultations, document reviews, training and capacity-building activities, in English.

v. Experience in HR management and best practices, and Zambian labour laws.

vi. Experience in NGO governance, financial systems and audit processes.

vii. Experience in sustainability planning, partnership development and resource mobilisation.

viii. Strong analytical and communication skills.

ix. Expertise in gender, education and development programming.

x. Strong experience in governance, systems strengthening and MEAL.

xi. Demonstrated experience in capacity building and facilitation.

xii. Experience supporting multi-country programmes and decentralised structures.

10.0 Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on:

i. Technical approach and understanding of FAWE's context.

ii. Relevant experience and past assignments.

iii. Qualifications of the proposed team.

iv. Cost-effectiveness and value for money.

11.0 Payment Terms

Payments will be milestone-based and linked to deliverables, including:

i. Inception report.

ii. Assessment report.

iii. Strategy and tools development.

iv. Capacity-building delivery.

v. Final report.

12.0 Ethical Considerations

The firm must:

i. Adhere to FAWE's safeguarding and gender policies.

ii. Ensure confidentiality of all organisational information.

iii. Apply participatory, inclusive and gender-responsive approaches.

13.0 Application Requirements

Interested firms/consultants should submit:

i. Technical proposal (methodology, work plan).

ii. Financial proposal.

iii. Company/consultant profile.

iv. Examples of similar work for organisations with regional presence.

v. At least 2 references.

14.0 Timelines

i. The expected timeline for the assignment is to start in mid-December 2026 (tentatively 15 December 2026) and end on 15 June 2027.

15.0 Application Submission

Applications should be addressed to the Executive Director, FAWE Africa, and emailed to procurement@fawe.org with the subject line: FAWE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING PARTNER – FAWE Zambia Chapter, to reach FAWE not later than close of business on 23 November 2026, 5:00 pm (EAT).

Only email applications and firms who meet the set requirements will be considered. All application documents must be sent in one email. Responses will only be sent to the short-listed firms.