

**Terms of reference for a Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the project
“Strengthening feminist spaces for action! Women's rights organisations networking in
the Great Lakes Region”**

1. Introduction

These terms of reference were prepared by *medica mondiale* e.V. upon consultation with respective partner organizations, to provide key information to the consultant team, partner organisations and stakeholders involved in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) and clarify expectations.

2. Background

About *medica mondiale* e.V.

medica mondiale (mm) is a feminist women's rights organisation. For over 30 years, we have been campaigning against conflict-related sexualised violence and against power relations that oppress women. Together with local partner organisations in Northern Iraq/Kurdistan, Afghanistan, West Africa, the African Great Lakes Region (Burundi, Uganda, DRC and Rwanda) as well as in South-eastern Europe, we support survivors of sexualised violence, oppose discriminatory power relations, and empower women's rights activists.

Through programmes and in partnership with local women's rights organisations, *medica mondiale* e.V. takes a multi-level approach to address the various factors contributing to violence against women and girls: On the individual level, *medica mondiale* e.V. provides access to holistic services (psychosocial, health, legal, economic) for survivors of (sexualised) gender-based violence (SGBV). On the level of women's and girls' social environment, *medica mondiale* e.V. supports communities to recognise and protect women's and girls' rights and to support survivors of and women affected by (S)GBV. On the institutional level, *medica mondiale* e.V. capacitates relevant public institutions from the health and legal sector to adopt a stress- and trauma-sensitive approach towards survivors and to establish cross-institutional referral and support systems. On the political level, *medica mondiale* e.V. advocates for laws, policies and resolutions that address (S)GBV and promote women's political participation. On the societal level, *medica mondiale* e.V. campaigns against sexism and gender stereotypes, raises awareness on (S)GBV and the long-term impacts of trauma within societies. Stress- and trauma-sensitivity are fundamental principles of our work, which is spelled out in *medica mondiale*'s specifically developed stress- and trauma-sensitive approach (STA).

Our foremost aim is to bring an end to sexualised wartime violence and other forms of gender-based violence. At the local, national and international levels we join with other female activists to campaign for the rights, protection and participation of women in establishing gender justice and removing power gaps.

Further information on *medica mondiale* e.V. can be found on our website: <https://medicamondiale.org/en/>.

Project/ Programme Background

The project “Strengthening feminist spaces for action! Women's rights organisations networking in the Great Lakes Region” in Burundi, Uganda, DRC and Rwanda is currently being implemented by the implementing partner organisations Dushirehamwe Association (Burundi), UWONET (Uganda), CAFED (DRC) and the Rwanda Women Network (Rwanda) since 01.12.2024 until 28.02.2027. It is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The overall project budget for the PAR is 40.000 euros.

The *Dushirehamwe Association* (Burundi) is a nationwide network with strong community bases in all 16 provinces that has been implementing projects to combat sexual- gender-based violence (SGBV), for the socio-economic reintegration of survivors and to promote female leadership. UWONET (*Uganda Women's Network*) campaigns as umbrella womens rights organisation with its 23 member organisations for for women's rights. CAFED (*Collectif des Associations Féminines pour le Développement*) is in leadership of 25 women's organisations promoting for the topic of gender and gender-specific violence within civil society in North Kivu. Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) strengthen the socio-economic empowerment of women, their political participation and sensitising society to gender equality with building networks and partnerships to support women.

a. Context of intervention

The project builds on experiences with regional networking structures and aims to link women's rights activists and organisations from four countries in the Great Lakes region. In addition to strengthening regional networking, the women's rights organisations are to be empowered with organisational development, female leadership and self-care for activists in post- and conflict contexts, in order to be visible as civil society voices across countries in the long term and to shape socio-political transformation processes in the sense of gender justice in the Great Lakes region.

b. Objectives of the intervention (intended impact and outcomes) and target groups

Project objective: Organisationally strengthened women's rights organisations network regionally, are visible and organise formats for professional exchange among themselves.

Subgoal 1. Key feminist actors in the project countries are networked and have access to reliable data on the most important women's rights needs in their country.

Subgoal 2. Partner organisations are networked regionally, share their field-tested technical approaches (combating & preventing SGBV) with each other and engage in joint advocacy work as a regionally networked voice in the region.

Subgoal 3. The partner organisations have anchored staff and self-care mechanisms in their organisations and applied feminist leadership principles.

Direct beneficiaries: 4 Women's rights organisations with around 100 employees, with the temporary involvement of experts from member organisations in 4 countries, Uganda, Rwanda, DRC and Burundi, as well as local advocates and lawyers for women's rights.

The indirect target group is reached through the occasional involvement of local authorities, cultural leaders, government focal points in political institutions and political interest groups (at the local and provincial level) in the implementation of participatory action research.

Main activities in the intervention

1. Regional exchange of expertise
2. Joint advocacy and lobbying activities
3. Participatory action research
4. Training in staff and self-care (STA - *mm*), establishment of team supervision
5. Workshops on feminist leadership

The PAR will focus on the period from 01.09.2025 to 31.01.2025 in three of the four project countries (in Burundi, a PAR already took place), working closely with the 3 partner organisations UWONET (Uganda), Rwanda Women s Network (Ruanda), CAFED (DRC), Dushirehamwe (Burundi) on site and remotely.

3. Objective of the Participatory Action Research

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) aims to create a reflective and action-oriented space for feminist activists and organizations to collectively engage in analysis, knowledge generation, and strategic planning around key issues related to gender justice and SGBV in the Great Lakes Region. The consultancy will technically accompany this process, providing expert guidance in participatory research methods while enabling local actors to lead the reflection and analysis themselves.

In collaboration with key partners (Ministry, local partner associations, women's civil society associations, etc.), the consultant's main objective will be the facilitation of the PAR enabling groups, associations, or activists from the women's movement to come together in order to create a dynamic for reflection and action on key issues for the women's movement in the three countries DRC, Uganda and Rwanda. To this end, a Participatory Action Research will be conceptualised, implemented, and evaluated by the actors of the women's movement themselves, technically accompanied by a consultant with expertise in action research.

Core Principles and methodological commitments

The consultancy is expected to apply feminist, inclusive, and empowering methodologies, grounded in the following principles:

- Feminist research practice: Co-creation of knowledge with women and girls affected by or engaged in the feminist movement. Use creative, participatory, and accessible methods (e.g. visual mapping, storytelling, dialogue circles).
- Promotion of participation and empowerment, recognizing women and girls as active agents and co-researchers.
- Reflexivity in approach and implementation, enabling continuous critical reflection and adaptation.
- Change orientation, where the process contributes to tangible, meaningful shifts defined by and for women and girls at individual, social, or political levels.
- Inclusion and Safety: Ensure inclusive participation, emotional safety, and trauma sensitivity in all stages.

Specific Objectives

The consultancy will be focusing on:

1. Mapping key actors, initiatives, and dynamics within the feminist movement and community-based protection systems related to SGBV in Burundi, DRC, and Rwanda.
 - Literature review on existing stakeholder mappings
 - Define country-specific key issues and priorities per organization and context
 - Identify opportunities for regional synergies and shared learning.
2. Facilitating reflection on challenges, strategies, and strengths within national feminist ecosystems, contributing to a deeper understanding of movement dynamics and collaborative practices.
3. Generating action-oriented insights to strengthen future programming, advocacy strategies, and institutional partnerships.
4. Facilitation of validation at respective context at various levels in close collaboration with the partner organisations.
5. Facilitate National Forums based on research results in close collaboration with the partner organisations.
6. Supporting the development of a regional strategic action plan based on the PAR findings, to anchor upcoming regional exchanges.
7. Ensuring interface with the accompanying evaluation, including regular exchange and feedback loops with the evaluation consultancy team to ensure learning is reflected and integrated into strategic decision-making.

Guiding Questions

The following overarching questions will guide the PAR process:

- What is the current landscape of feminist actors and initiatives within the project countries?
- How are these actors addressing SGBV, and what strategies have proven effective?
- What barriers and opportunities exist in terms of feminist collaboration, advocacy, and sustainability?
- How can the PAR outcomes inform and strengthen future project design, programming, and donor engagement?

4. Tasks of the consultants

The consultant(s) will:

- Coordinate with the medica mondiale project team and partner organizations.
- Identify and engage relevant feminist stakeholders.
- Co-design and facilitation of PAR sessions (including National Forum) with local actors.
- Ensure inclusive and safe participation in all sessions.
- Analyse data using participatory and feminist methods.
- Draft and finalize the report in line with medica mondiale standards.

5. *medica mondiale*'s methodology

In keeping with *medica mondiale*'s feminist mission, the evaluation will be informed by intersectional feminist principles, as manifested in:

- a team that recognises that knowledge is power, reflects on the positionality of its members, and is open to different forms of knowledge;
- gender analysis and intersectional analysis throughout the assignment;
- commitment to broad participation in the process;
- application of *medica mondiale*'s stress- and trauma-sensitive approach¹, especially when interacting with survivors of sexualised and gender-based violence (SGBV).

6. Organisation of the assignment

The PAR is expected to be carried out between 01.09.2025 to 31.01.2026. The budget for the PAR in 3 countries is 40.000 euros, including all honoraria of the PAR-team, travel and other costs managed by the PAR-team (including VAT, if applicable).

Roles and responsibilities:

- *medica mondiale*'s project manager steers the overall coordination with relevant departments.
- *medica mondiale*'s project manager compiles necessary project data, briefs the consultant team on the intervention and on practical issues such as safety and logistics, and introduces the research team to the local partners.
- A *medica mondiale* trauma adviser will provide orientation on incorporating STA in the research process and products.
- A reference group composed of representatives of *medica mondiale*, the partner organisation and possibly representatives of women rights holders in the intervention advises and provides feedback on the inception report, first findings presented in the validation ("preliminary findings") workshop, and the draft final report.

7. Deliverables

- **Kick-off meeting** with participatory methods (including *medica mondiale* and partner organisations), validation of PAR objective & collection of further relevant data (interview partners).
- **Inception Report** (Draft and final version, max 20 pages, eng/french), commenting by reference group (*medica mondiale* and partner organisations)
 - The PAR team is expected to compile an Inception Report with the final specified methodology, analysis methods, data collection instruments and work plan for both overall evaluation and field/data collection phase.
- **Facilitation of PAR activities** in close collaboration with *medica mondiale* and partner organizations (details to be defined in inception phase; one per country, three in total), including the National Forums.
- **Draft PAR Report** (max. 30 pages excluding annexes, English/French), including:
 - Overview and methodology
 - Contextual analysis and actor mapping (per country, three in total)
 - Key findings and lessons learned
 - Recommendations

¹ [Glossary Term: STA - Stress- and Trauma-sensitive Approach® \(medicamondiale.org\)](https://www.medicamondiale.org/)

- Action-oriented insights for project and movement strengthening / Mapping of the regional Action plan.
- **Final PAR Report**, integrating feedback, in English and French, including an executive summary (5 pages summary).
- **PowerPoint presentation** or other creative product (e.g. infographics) summarising overall findings and recommendations, and presentation thereof.

8. Proposed timeline –

Evaluation phase	Time	Description of phase
Inception-phase	September 2025	Kick-Off meeting Desk analysis of relevant documentation (Explorative interviews with <i>medica mondiale</i> staff, partner organisations and other relevant stakeholder) Inception report (eng/french) Feedback loops with Reference Group
Data collection and analysis	October and November 2025	Data collection – facilitation of PAR activities Continued analysis and triangulation of data Validation of research results within respective context
Synthesis and report writing	December 2025	1 Project-end report including the following steps: Preliminary findings workshop with <i>medica mondiale</i> and partner organisations Feedback loops with Reference Group Facilitation of the National Forums
	January 2026	Presentation and discussion of approved PAR Report main findings, conclusions and recommendation to a wider (strategic level) circle of <i>medica mondiale</i> and partners Summaries

9. Competencies required of the PAR consultant team

- Proven experience in feminist PAR or similar participatory methods.
- Experience in movement building, SGBV, or intersectional feminist practice.
- Expertise in moderating participatory workshop formats (online and in presence).
- Thematic (regional) experience in (S)GBV, (feminist) advocacy, empowerment of survivors of trauma, conflict sensitivity.
- Proven commitment to feminist and intersectional approaches and research.

- Regional competency and experience working in the Great Lakes Region (Uganda, DRC, Rwanda); we strongly encourage regional teams to apply.
- Strong skills in conflict-sensitive, empowering and hierarchy-sensible communication.
- Proven experience in gender/intersectional analysis or related research and practice.
- Proficiency in English and French, any other languages is seen as asset.

Furthermore, the consultant team must be independent from *medica mondiale* and its partner organisations.

10. Application Procedure

Applications with the subject line “PAR 2025” are received under recruitment@medicamondiale.org until August 24th, 2025. **Offers should be submitted in English.**

Offers shall be submitted in a pdf-document and contain the following:

- Date of offer submission (equal to email submission)
- Name of company and/or expert(s)
- Composition of proposed consultant team including dedicated responsibilities of each expert
- Description of Consultant Team with short bio per Expert, max. 1 page for entire Team
- Detailed CV of each team member
- Proposed methodology
- Complete and detailed budget breakdown including VAT (if applicable) and details to individual consulting fees per working day as well as additional costs in relation to travel etc.; overall not exceeding 40,000 EURO.
- Two references per team member, incl. reference contact details
- Links to publication of earlier conducted work in relation to evaluations etc.

Only complete applications shall be considered. Only short listed/successful candidates will be contacted. The interviews are likely to take place on the 03. and 04. of September 2025.