

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW AND REDESIGN OF THE WOMEN SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM

1. Important TOR Information and Dates

TOR Name: Women School of Leadership (WSOL) Model Review and Redesign		User Department: Social Compliance and Risk
Location of Contracting Entity: Nairobi-Kenya		Correspondence Language(s): English

TOR Package Available from: 22/09/2026	Tender Package Pickup Location: Fairtrade Africa Website
Deadline for Offer Submission: 15/10/2026 at 12 Noon EAT	Submit Offers to: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net

Fairtrade Africa reserves the right to accept or reject any late offers

Questions and Answers (Q&A)	
If any, Submit Questions in writing to: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net	
Last Day for Questions: 05/10/2026	Questions will be answered by: 07/10/2026
Questions will be answered through: procurement@fairtradeafrica.net	

2. Background

Fairtrade Africa (FTA) is the umbrella network organisation representing Fairtrade-certified producers and workers across 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East. Central to FTA's mandate is the promotion of gender equality, women's economic empowerment, and inclusive leadership within producer organisations, covering both Small Producer Organisations (SPOs) and Hired Labour Organisations (HLOs).

Since its inception in 2016, the Women School of Leadership (WSOL) has served as FTA's flagship gender model. It is a life-transforming, experience-based programme, not a formal or academic training, that starts with the woman herself: her sense of worth, her voice, her knowledge, and her power to shape the world around her. The programme operates through trained facilitators and Trainers of Trainers (ToTs), who cascade learning to far wider groups of women within their producer organisations, farms, and communities.

Over nine years, the WSOL has trained 536+ participants directly across West Africa, Kenya, Malawi, and Ethiopia (2017–2026), with cascading reaching over 25,952 women and men across 258 communities. In Kenya alone, cascading reached 8,152 people in 2023.

3. Rationale for the Assignment

The WSOL has proven its power: women who complete the programme consistently report stronger voices in their households and organisations, greater confidence to claim their rights, and deeper solidarity with other women. Yet the 2026 Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the NORAD-funded WSOL project in Kenya, the strongest evidence base to date, shows a programme that has opened voices without yet shifting power: 76.4% of workers report sharing ideas in meetings, but only 46.4% feel their opinions influence decisions; leadership uptake for engaged participants sits at 63.1% of target; and only 45.8% of beneficiaries demonstrate verifiable entrepreneurship and leadership skills despite strong self-reported confidence gains. Cascading reached 307% of target, but many participants wanted more detailed sessions, limited capital access is undermining the economic module, household gender-norm change remains partial, and current MEL tools measure participation rather than transformation.

These evidence gaps sit alongside a significantly changed operating environment since the WSOL was first designed in 2017: intensifying climate shocks, digital tools the curriculum does not yet address, evolved safeguarding standards, growing mental health and psychosocial needs, and direct feedback from country teams and facilitators that several modules feel outdated and under-resourced for the scale of cascading required.

The Kenya MTE is the strongest evidence base FTA holds to date, but it is not the only relevant experience. WSOL's earlier roll-outs in Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia surfaced their own, distinct barriers to women's progression into leadership, including, in Ethiopia, the limitations of a single curriculum design applied across very different SPO and HLO settings. FTA is therefore commissioning a comprehensive review and redesign of the WSOL model, not only its curriculum, grounded in a dedicated diagnostic phase that draws together lessons from Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Kenya, to ensure the next phase of implementation is life-transforming, practically grounded, contextually adaptive, and structurally connected to real leadership opportunity across our producer network.

4. Scope of the Assignment

This assignment goes beyond the review of learning materials. While revising the curriculum is an important part of the work, the consultant is expected to review and strengthen the WSOL model as a whole: a leadership development system, not a training course. The scope of the assignment therefore spans six interconnected components:

- Curriculum and learning journey: the 10 WSOL themes and how they build on one another
- Facilitator development and certification: how community-based facilitators are prepared, accredited, and supported to deliver transformative content

Note: facilitators currently have no formal accreditation, removing a key incentive for sustained engagement. The facilitator development component must address this directly.

- Cascading approaches: how WSOL learning reaches beyond direct participants to wider groups of women and men
- Mentorship and alumni engagement: how graduates continue to be supported and connected after completing WSOL
- Leadership pathways for graduates within producer organisations: how WSOL learning translates into real leadership roles and influence within SPOs and HLOs
- Mechanisms for sustainability and institutional ownership: how the model is owned and sustained by country teams and producer organisations beyond any single project cycle

The intention of this broadened scope is to ensure the assignment addresses not only what women learn through WSOL, but how that learning translates into meaningful leadership roles and influence within Fairtrade producer organisations.

The consultant should also independently investigate whether the programme name — 'Women School of Leadership' — remains appropriate across all contexts, particularly HLO settings where male participants have in some cases faced social pushback for attending a programme framed as being for women, and present findings and recommendations to FTA.

5. Objectives of the Assignment

The consultant/firm engaged under this assignment is expected to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: Diagnose the current WSOL model

Before any redesign work begins, conduct a dedicated diagnostic assessment to build a robust evidence base for the assignment. This diagnostic phase should:

- Assess which of the existing 10 WSOL themes remain relevant, and which require substantive revision or replacement
- Identify content gaps and outdated areas across facilitator guides and participant materials
- Examine the barriers that limit women's progression into leadership positions, drawing directly on lessons learned from WSOL's roll-out in Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and, most recently, Ghana, Malawi and Kenya
- Explore the factors affecting entrepreneurial and broader economic outcomes for WSOL graduates

- Review the effectiveness, strengths and limitations of the current cascading model

This should include an evidence-based assessment of whether the standard 1:50–100 cascading ratio is realistic and achievable, particularly in SPO contexts, and propose a recommended ratio and timeframe grounded in field evidence.

Diagnostic findings should directly inform the Participatory Review Report and shape the redesign priorities for Phase 3.

Objective 2: Redesign the WSOL model

- Redesign the WSOL curriculum and the wider model, including facilitator development and certification, cascading approaches, mentorship and alumni engagement, and leadership pathways for graduates, using participatory, gender-transformative, and experience-based adult learning methodologies, integrating emerging priorities including climate resilience, digital financial literacy, GBV and safeguarding, mental wellness, and women's economic empowerment.
- The redesign must produce two tailored curriculum tracks, one developed specifically for SPO settings, and one developed specifically for HLO settings, supported by a clear adaptation framework (Section 6).

On mental wellness: the current curriculum raises GBV awareness but has no psychosocial support pathway for participants who have personally experienced GBV. The redesign must embed appropriate referral pathways and peer support approaches.

Objective 3: Strengthen the learning architecture

Propose a coherent learning architecture for the redesigned WSOL, including:

- Sequencing of modules/themes across the learning journey
- Core versus optional content, responding directly to feedback from the NORAD Phase 1 evaluation
- Participant-led practice projects that let women apply learning in real settings
- Peer learning opportunities within and across cohorts
- Post-training reinforcement mechanisms to sustain learning after formal sessions end
- Alumni learning pathways that set out where WSOL graduates progress to after completing the programme

Graduation criteria: the consultant must define clear, defensible minimum requirements for programme completion, to prevent partial enrolment (e.g. two or three modules only) being reported as graduation.

This should support a clearer progression from personal empowerment to leadership practice and organisational influence.

Objective 4: Develop implementation-ready materials

Produce facilitator guides, participant resource materials (visual, oral, and written formats), and contextualisation tools that are adaptable across diverse African contexts, including low-literacy and low-connectivity environments, and usable by community-based facilitators, with availability of funding.

Objective 5: Strengthen MEL for transformative change

Develop a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework and tools specifically designed to capture transformative outcomes, including:

- Influence on decision-making, at household, organisational and community level
- Leadership uptake and retention over time
- Participation in organisational governance structures
- Economic empowerment outcomes
- Shifts in social and gender norms

- Quality of cascading delivery
- Longer-term outcomes, tracked through tracer studies

Most of these indicators are qualitative in nature. The MEL component should therefore be tightly scoped and clearly focused, prioritising a small number of well-designed qualitative tools capable of evidencing WSOL's contribution to women's leadership and empowerment, rather than attempting to quantify every dimension of change.

Objective 6: Strengthen the organisational enabling environment

Training alone is insufficient if women do not have the opportunity to apply their skills. The consultant should propose approaches that support producer organisations in creating the conditions for women to lead, including:

- Leadership opportunities for WSOL graduates within SPO and HLO structures
- Supportive governance structures that open pathways for women's participation
- Board and management sensitisation on gender-inclusive leadership
- Gender-responsive organisational practices more broadly

Objective 7: Pilot, validate and finalise

Pilot the redesigned programme with women participants in at least two country contexts (one SPO, one HLO setting), incorporating direct feedback from participants and community-based facilitators before finalisation.

Throughout all objectives, the consultant must demonstrate that women, including those who have never attended formal school, are participants in, not subjects of, this review and redesign process.

6. Co-Creation and Participatory Requirements

The participatory approach set out across this ToR is central to the credibility and impact of the assignment. To ensure this is applied consistently, the consultant is required, at minimum, to:

- Engage both WSOL alumni and current participants throughout the diagnostic, review, redesign, and validation stages, not only at the initial consultation stage
- Ensure meaningful representation of women with limited or no formal education across all consultation and validation activities, using accessible, non-written methods where needed
- Engage community-based facilitators and FTA country teams as active contributors to the redesign, not only as sources of feedback
- Validate all redesigned modules directly with participants and facilitators before finalisation, with validation findings documented and demonstrably addressed in the Final WSOL Programme Package

The consultant's technical proposal should set out concretely how these minimum requirements will be met in practice, including specific approaches for engaging women with no formal schooling.

7. Differentiating SPO and HLO Pathways: Adaptation Framework

Experience from WSOL's early roll-out in Ethiopia demonstrated that a single curriculum design does not adequately serve the differing organisational structures, work patterns, and leadership pathways of SPOs and HLOs. Since this ToR calls for two tailored curriculum tracks, the consultant is required to develop an adaptation framework, as part of the Revised WSOL Programme Framework (D3), that clearly sets out:

- Content common to both the SPO and HLO tracks
- Content requiring contextualisation for each setting
- Delivery adaptations appropriate to each setting (for example, session timing, format, and facilitation approach)

- Distinct leadership pathways for each stakeholder group, reflecting how women move into influence and decision-making within SPO versus HLO governance structures

Where possible, the adaptation framework should align with Fairtrade's ongoing Standard evolution project and reflect the operational realities of Fairtrade producer organisations.

8. Sustainability and Leadership Strategy

The WSOL's sustainability rests on community ownership. By training community-based facilitators rather than relying solely on external experts, and by producing materials that can be used by women with no formal educational background, the programme has always been designed to outlast any single project cycle. The redesigned WSOL will deepen this approach by:

- Producing a comprehensive facilitator Training of Trainers (ToT) package, including the facilitator development and certification approach set out under Objective 2, usable by country teams and partner organisations independently
- Embedding a strengthened cascading model that systematically converts farm- and cooperative-level training into peer-led learning that reaches far beyond direct participants
- Building the MEL capacity of country teams to track and report on transformative outcomes, creating an evidence base for future investment and advocacy
- Documenting transformation stories from nine years of alumni as a living resource for future programming and fundraising

Beyond the curriculum itself, FTA's broader ambition is for the WSOL to anchor a lasting leadership development ecosystem for women in Fairtrade supply chains, connected directly to the organisational enabling-environment work under Objective 6. The following strategic pillars will guide the sustainability and leadership development dimensions of the assignment:

- Comprehensive leadership curriculum expansion: broadening leadership content over time to deepen communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and digital leadership skills
- Strategic partnerships: collaborating with industry leaders, academic institutions, and private sector actors to keep content relevant and open mentorship and career pathways for participants
- Practical experience: establishing apprenticeship and internship opportunities that strengthen employability and leadership competencies beyond the classroom
- Mentorship and networking: creating structured mentorship and networking platforms that connect participants with established women leaders and professionals
- Alumni network: developing and maintaining a strong alumni network to sustain peer learning, mentorship, and tracking of graduate impact over time
- Financial sustainability: implementing a resource mobilisation strategy drawing on grants, sponsorships, partnerships, and income-generating initiatives to fund the programme beyond individual project cycles

Mainstreaming: exploring how the WSOL can be embedded within core Fairtrade programming and co-funded budgets, and whether elements can be offered to cooperatives on a cost-sharing basis, reducing reliance on dedicated donor grants.

- Programme-level MEAL: a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning framework including tracer studies, longitudinal stakeholder feedback, and outcome measurement, complementing the curriculum-specific MEL framework under Objective 5

9. Scope of Work

The assignment covers five phases over approximately 15 weeks:

Phase 1: Inception and Diagnostic Review (Weeks 1–2)

- Review all existing WSOL theme materials, facilitation guides, and participant resources, assessing depth of transformative content and accessibility for non-literate participants
- Conduct the diagnostic assessment set out under Objective 1: module relevance, content gaps, barriers to leadership progression (drawing on Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Kenya experience), factors affecting entrepreneurial outcomes, and cascading-model effectiveness
- Review the FTA Gender Strategy, Fairtrade Standards (including the ongoing Standard evolution project), MTE findings, and country programme MEL data

The diagnostic must also draw on the full body of existing WSOL evaluations: the 2022 Impact Assessment (Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire), the BENGU evaluation, and the Kenya NORAD MTE. FTA will provide these at inception.

- Produce an Inception Report with a participatory methodology, co-creation approach, diagnostic findings summary, stakeholder engagement plan, and workplan

Phase 2: Participatory Consultations and Co-Creation (Weeks 3–6)

- Design and facilitate participatory consultations, including storytelling circles, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, with WSOL alumni, current participants (including women with no formal education), community facilitators, and FTA country teams, in line with the minimum requirements in Section 5
- Conduct in-person consultations in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi and Kenya/Naivasha, accompanied by the FTA Gender Coordinator
- Conduct virtual consultations with Ethiopia and other country contexts
- Compile a Participatory Review Report integrating diagnostic and consultation findings, transformation stories, and redesign priorities

Phase 3: Model Redesign (Weeks 7–12)

- Redesign all 10 WSOL themes, strengthening transformative content, practical grounding, and accessibility for participants regardless of literacy level
- Develop the SPO/HLO adaptation framework set out in Section 6, and produce two tailored curriculum tracks
- Design the learning architecture set out under Objective 3: sequencing, core/optional content, practice projects, peer learning, reinforcement mechanisms, and alumni learning pathways
- Design the facilitator development and certification approach
- Strengthen the cascading model based on diagnostic findings from Phase 1
- Design mentorship and alumni engagement mechanisms, and define leadership pathways for graduates within SPOs and HLOs
- Develop or revise facilitator guides for each theme, and participant resource materials in visual, oral, and written formats
- Produce a Programme Cascading and Contextualisation Guide for country teams and facilitators across SPO and HLO settings
- Develop the expanded MEL framework set out under Objective 5
- Develop the Organisational Enabling Environment Guidance Note set out under Objective 6

Phase 4: Piloting and Validation (Weeks 12–13)

- Pilot the redesigned programme in at least two cohorts in two country contexts (one SPO, one HLO setting), using community-based facilitators

Piloting is within scope. The consultancy is not complete until gaps identified during piloting have been addressed in the final materials — the Pilot Report must include the consultant's documented response to pilot findings.

- Gather feedback directly from women participants, particularly those with no formal schooling, and from facilitators

- Validate redesigned modules against the co-creation requirements in Section 5
- Facilitate a validation workshop with FTA staff, country teams, and selected participant representatives

Phase 5: Finalisation and Handover (Weeks 14–15)

- Submit all final materials in print-ready, digital, and editable formats
- Facilitate a facilitator orientation and knowledge transfer session with FTA staff and country facilitators
- Produce a Final Consultancy Report documenting the process, findings, and recommendations

10. Duration, Location and Travel

This assignment is expected to run for approximately 15 weeks from contract signing, reflecting the expanded scope set out in this ToR. The consultant will work remotely for the majority of the assignment, with in-person travel required to:

- Ghana: stakeholder consultations and piloting (SPO/HLO context)
- Côte d'Ivoire: stakeholder consultations (SPO context)
- Kenya (Naivasha): stakeholder consultations and piloting (HLO context)

In-person visits are sampled to four countries. Should budget constraints require adjustment, FTA and the consultant will agree a revised approach at inception, with a preference for retaining Southern Africa representation.

The consultant will be accompanied by the FTA Gender Coordinator on in-country travel. Consultations for Ethiopia and other country contexts will be conducted virtually. All travel costs, subsistence, and applicable visas are covered under the assignment budget, which FTA will confirm in line with the note at the start of this document.

11. Reporting Arrangements

The consultant will report directly to the FTA Gender and Programmes Coordinator, with technical guidance from the Social Compliance and Risk Department. The consultant is expected to:

- Hold a kick-off meeting with FTA within one week of contract signing
- Provide brief progress updates at the end of each phase, aligned with the deliverable schedule in Section 9
- Flag any risks, delays, or scope issues to FTA promptly and in writing
- Submit all deliverables to FTA for review and written sign-off before proceeding to the next phase where dependencies exist

12. Consultant Profile and Required Qualifications

FTA invites applications from individual consultants or consultancy firms/teams with the following qualifications and experience:

- Advanced degree in Gender Studies, Adult Education, Development Studies, Organisational Development, Social Sciences, or a related field
- At least 7 years of experience designing gender-transformative, participatory curricula or training programmes, ideally for low-literacy adult populations
- Demonstrated experience with cascading or Training of Trainers (ToT) models, including facilitator certification or accreditation approaches, in agricultural, cooperative, or supply-chain contexts
- Strong track record in participatory, community-based research methods (FGDs, KIIs, storytelling approaches) with women and marginalised groups
- Experience developing MEL frameworks that capture transformative, largely qualitative outcomes, not only participation-based indicators

- Experience with organisational strengthening or institutional development, ideally supporting cooperatives, producer organisations, or membership-based institutions to build inclusive governance and leadership pathways
- Familiarity with Fairtrade, SPO/HLO structures, or agricultural value chains in Africa is a strong advantage
- Working knowledge of French is desirable, given consultations in Côte d'Ivoire; Portuguese is an added advantage
- Willingness and ability to travel to Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi and Kenya during the assignment
- If a team/firm: a lead consultant with the above profile, supported by team members with complementary skills in instructional design, MEL, organisational development, or graphic/materials development

13. Ethics, Safeguarding and Intellectual Property

- The consultant must adhere to FTA's Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct at all times
- Free, informed consent must be obtained from all individuals participating in consultations, storytelling, or piloting activities, with clear explanation of how their information and stories will be used
- All data collected must be handled confidentially and stored securely in line with FTA's data protection standards
- All materials, frameworks, and outputs produced under this assignment are the intellectual property of Fairtrade Africa

14. Application Process

Interested consultants/firms should submit the following documents:

- A technical proposal (maximum 8 pages) outlining understanding of the assignment, including the diagnostic phase and model-wide scope, proposed methodology, and workplan
- A financial proposal detailing the consultant's proposed fee (inclusive tax) and cost breakdown for the assignment
- CV(s) of the lead consultant and any proposed team members
- Two samples of previous relevant work (e.g., curricula, facilitator guides, MEL frameworks, or organisational development tools)
- Contact details of three references from similar assignments

Evaluation Criteria

Technical Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Relevant qualifications and experience of the consultant/team in gender-transformative curriculum design and adult learning	20%
Demonstrated understanding of the assignment, quality and feasibility of the proposed methodology and workplan	25%
Experience with participatory research and cascading/ToT models in agricultural or cooperative contexts	15%
Track record of similar assignments, including sample materials or references	10%
Financial proposal - cost-effectiveness and value for money	30%

N/B: Bidders must score 75% to proceed to financial evaluations.

15. Submission Guidelines

Interested consultants or firms should submit a proposal to procurement@fairtradeafrica.net on or before **15th October 2026**.

The subject of the email submission should be **"REVIEW AND REDESIGN OF THE WOMEN SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM"**.

The proposal should be structured in the following six sections:

- Section 1: An overview of the organisation profile, including relevant experience.
- Section 2: CVs and professional profiles of the lead consultant(s) and any associates who will be assigned to this assignment.
- Section 3: Financial proposal / quotation showing the proposed assignment fees, and any reimbursable costs.
- Section 4: Proposed methodology, indicative workplan and any additional value-add for Fairtrade Africa within the scope of this service provision.
- Section 5: Three references (name, organisation and contact details) for similar assignments undertaken within the last five years.
- Section 6: Copy of certificate of registration, tax compliance documentation and payment terms if contracted

N/B: Only shortlisted firms will be contacted.