Terms of Reference

Consultancy to Develop the African Disability Forum's Communications Strategy, Communications Policy, Branding Framework and Communications Toolkit

Assignment	Development of the ADF Communications Strategy, Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines, Communications Policy and Communications Toolkit
Contracting organization	African Disability Forum (ADF) Secretariat
Type of contract	Individual consultant or consultancy firm, output-based
Duration	Two and a half (2.5) months (ten weeks), from Monday 30 November 2026 to Friday 5 February 2027
Duty station	Home-based, with virtual consultations and a validation workshop
Language	English (French is an asset)
Application deadline	14 November 2026, 5:00 PM East Africa Time (EAT)

1. Background

The African Disability Forum (ADF) is the continental umbrella organization of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Africa. ADF works to advance the rights, inclusion, and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities by strengthening the disability movement, influencing policy and legislative processes, promoting inclusive development and humanitarian response, thereby fostering strategic partnerships across the continent.

As ADF continues to expand its programmes, partnerships, and advocacy initiatives, effective communication has become increasingly critical to advancing its mission, strengthening stakeholder engagement, enhancing organizational visibility, and amplifying the voices of persons with disabilities across Africa. ADF communicates with a diverse range of stakeholders, including OPDs, governments, regional and continental institutions, development partners, civil society organizations, the media, academia, and the general public.

While ADF has made significant progress in communicating its work through digital platforms, advocacy campaigns, publications, events, and strategic partnerships, there is a need to

strengthen the organization's overall communications function by establishing a clear strategic plan, a consistent brand identity, and standardized communication policies and procedures. This will enhance the quality, consistency, accessibility, and impact of ADF's communications while ensuring alignment with its organizational values and strategic priorities.

ADF therefore seeks to engage a qualified communications consultant (individual or firm) to facilitate the development of a Communications Strategy, Communications Policy, Branding Framework and Communications Toolkit. Through a participatory and evidence-based approach, the consultant will review ADF's current communications practices, engage key stakeholders, and develop practical, user-friendly documents that strengthen ADF's internal and external communications and promote consistent, accessible, and impactful organizational branding.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy

The purpose of this consultancy is to provide technical expertise to the African Disability Forum (ADF) in developing a comprehensive and integrated communications framework that strengthens the organization's strategic communications, brand identity, and communications governance. Building on a review of ADF's current communications practices and consultations with key stakeholders, the consultant will facilitate the development of an evidence-based Communications Strategy, Communications Policy, Branding Framework and Communications Toolkit that enhance ADF's visibility, promote consistent and accessible communication, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and support the effective delivery of ADF's mission and strategic objectives across Africa.

3. Objectives of the Consultancy

The specific objectives of the consultancy are to:

1. Review ADF's existing communications systems, branding, communication products, digital platforms, and relevant organizational documents, and assess its current communications strengths, gaps, opportunities, and priorities to inform the development of an integrated communications framework.
2. Develop a comprehensive Communications Strategy that provides strategic direction for ADF’s internal and external communications, stakeholder engagement, advocacy communications, digital communications and organisational visibility.
3. Develop a Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines that establish a clear and consistent organizational identity, messaging, visual standards, and accessibility requirements across all communication products and platforms.
4. Develop a Communications Policy that provides guidance on communications governance, roles and responsibilities, approval processes, media engagement, social media management, crisis communication, accessibility standards, and brand compliance.

5. Develop a practical Communications Toolkit comprising standardized templates and communication resources to support consistent implementation of the Communications Policy, Strategy, and Branding Framework across the organization.
6. Develop a costed Communications Action Plan with clear priorities, implementation timelines, roles and responsibilities, and performance indicators to guide the operationalization of the communications framework.
7. Facilitate stakeholder validation of the draft documents and incorporate feedback to produce final, high-quality deliverables that reflect ADF's strategic priorities and organizational context.

4. Scope of Work

The consultant will provide technical support to ADF in facilitating the development of an integrated communications framework through a participatory, evidence-based, and disability-inclusive approach. The consultant shall undertake the following tasks and deliverables. Any material addition to the agreed scope shall require ADF's written approval, including any implications for fees and timelines.

Workstream 1: Inception, Review and Communications Assessment

The consultant shall:

- Hold an inception meeting with ADF Management and the Communications Team to agree on the methodology, work plan, timelines, and deliverables.
- Prepare and submit an Inception Report outlining the methodology, stakeholder consultation plan, accessibility and reasonable accommodation arrangements, work plan, deliverables and implementation schedule.
- Review relevant organizational documents, including the Strategic Plan, communication materials, policies, publications, reports, website, social media platforms, and other relevant resources.
- Conduct targeted consultations with management, staff and representative member OPDs to validate findings and identify priorities. The consultation approach shall consider regional and linguistic diversity, different disability experiences, gender and age, with accessible participation arrangements.
- Assess ADF's current communications systems, branding, communication channels, stakeholder engagement approaches, internal communication practices, digital presence, accessibility standards, and communications governance.
- Identify key strengths, gaps, opportunities, risks, and recommendations that will inform the communications framework, and present them in a Communications Assessment Report.

Workstream 2: Development of the Communications Strategy

Based on the findings of the assessment, the consultant shall develop a comprehensive Communications Strategy that provides a clear strategic direction for ADF's communications

over the period 2027–2030, aligned with ADF's Strategic Plan 2024–2028 and to be reviewed upon adoption of the next Strategic Plan.

The strategy shall include, but not be limited to:

- Executive Summary.
- Introduction and organizational context.
- Situation analysis informed by the communications assessment.
- Strategic communications objectives aligned with ADF's Strategic Plan.
- Stakeholder and audience mapping, including member OPDs and other Pan-African institutions.
- Key messaging framework
- Strategic communication pillars covering:
    - Brand visibility and organizational positioning.
    - Stakeholder engagement and advocacy communications.
    - Digital communications and knowledge management.
    - Accessible, inclusive and consistent communications.
    - Communications capacity, governance and organizational learning.
- Communication channels and approaches.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework with key performance indicators, baselines or methods for establishing them, targets, data sources, reporting frequency and responsible roles.
- Prioritized, costed Communications Action Plan covering 2027–2028, identifying activities, responsible roles, timelines, estimated costs, costing assumptions, funding requirements and performance indicators.

Workstream 3: Development of the Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines

The consultant shall develop a Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines that strengthen ADF's organizational identity and ensure consistency across all communication products and platforms.

The framework shall include, at a minimum:

- Brand positioning.
- Brand purpose and value proposition.
- Brand personality.
- Brand voice and tone.
- Storytelling guidance.
- Accessibility standards for branded communications.
- Visual identity standards, including logo usage, typography, colour palette, imagery, iconography and layout principles.

- Co-branding and partner visibility guidelines.
- Standards for digital branding across online platforms and publications.

Workstream 4: Development of the Communications Policy

The consultant shall develop a Communications Policy that establishes governance, standards and procedures for communications across ADF.

The policy shall include, but not be limited to:

- Purpose, scope and guiding principles.
- Roles and responsibilities, including the policy owner, content originators, reviewers, approvers, authorized spokespersons and escalation arrangements, consistent with ADF's governance structure.
- Communications planning and coordination.
- Internal communication procedures.
- Approval and clearance processes.
- Media engagement protocols.
- Social media management.
- Brand compliance.
- Accessibility requirements.
- Photography, videography and storytelling procedures covering dignified representation, accessible and voluntary informed consent, intended uses, disability disclosure, safeguarding, secure consent records and withdrawal procedures and limitations.
- Crisis and reputational risk communication.
- Records management and document control.
- Policy monitoring and review mechanisms.

Workstream 5: Development of the Communications Toolkit, Validation and Capacity Strengthening

The consultant shall develop a practical Communications Toolkit to support the implementation of the communications framework. At a minimum, the toolkit shall include editable branded templates and guidance documents for:

- Newsletter template.
- Standard organizational report template.
- Policy brief template.
- Press release template.
- PowerPoint presentation template.
- Event concept note template.
- Event programme template.

- Social media and website templates, including for the ADF website, Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Email signature template.
- Letterhead template.
- Editorial and Style Guide, providing standards for writing, editorial style, disability-inclusive language, accessibility, grammar and punctuation conventions, document formatting, referencing, image captions, alternative text (alt text), terminology, ADF branding and other editorial requirements to ensure consistency across all ADF communications.

The consultant shall further:

- Facilitate an accessible validation workshop with ADF Senior Management Team, relevant staff and representative member OPDs to review the draft framework and document agreed revisions.
- Revise all draft documents based on feedback received during the validation process.
- Submit final documents in accessible, editable Microsoft Office formats and tagged, searchable PDF, together with native editable branding and design files, relevant licence information and a complete file inventory.
- Conduct a half-day orientation session for staff on the implementation and use of the Communications Strategy, Branding Framework, Communications Policy, Communications Toolkit, and Editorial and Style Guide. The session shall include practical exercises on template use, accessible content production, brand application and approval procedures, supported by accessible training materials.
- Submit 5.

The consultant shall submit the following deliverables. Each deliverable is considered complete only after written approval by ADF.

#	Deliverable	Content	Due
1	Inception Report	Understanding of the assignment, methodology, stakeholder consultation plan and list of stakeholders to be consulted, accessibility and reasonable accommodation arrangements, detailed work plan and schedule	End of week 1 4 Dec 2026
2	Communications Assessment Report	Findings of the document review and consultations: strengths, gaps, opportunities, risks and recommendations	End of week 3 18 Dec 2026
3	Draft Communications Strategy and costed Action Plan	Full draft strategy as set out in Workstream 2, including the MEL framework and the costed action plan	End of week 6 8 Jan 2027
4	Draft Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines	Full draft as set out in Workstream 3, including visual identity standards and co-branding guidelines	End of week 6 8 Jan 2027

#	Deliverable	Content	Due
5	Draft Communications Policy	Full draft policy as set out in Workstream 4	End of week 6 8 Jan 2027
6	Draft Communications Toolkit and Editorial and Style Guide	All templates listed in Workstream 5, and the Editorial and Style Guide	End of week 7 15 Jan 2027
7	Validation workshop and report	Workshop design, presentation of all drafts, facilitation, and a short report of feedback received with the proposed response	End of week 8 22 Jan 2027
8	Final documents	Final Communications Strategy and Action Plan, Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines, Communications Policy, Communications Toolkit and Editorial and Style Guide, revised after validation	End of week 10 5 Feb 2027
9	Staff orientation session	Half-day orientation for ADF staff, with practical exercises and accessible training materials	End of week 10 5 Feb 2027

All deliverables shall be submitted in English, in editable formats (Word, PowerPoint, Excel as appropriate) and in tagged, searchable PDF. Templates and visual identity files shall be handed over with their source files (e.g. Adobe, Canva or equivalent) and all fonts and image assets used, with relevant licence information and a complete file inventory. All documents shall be accessible: screen-reader compatible, with alternative text for images, sufficient colour contrast, and no meaning conveyed by colour alone.

6. Duration and Timeline

The assignment is expected to start on Monday 30 November 2026 and shall be completed within two and a half (2.5) months (ten weeks), by Friday 5 February 2027. The consultant may propose adjustments in the Inception Report, subject to ADF approval, without extending the overall duration.

Phase	Main activities	Timeframe
1. Inception	Inception meeting, Inception Report, document collection	Week 1 30 Nov to 4 Dec 2026
2. Review and assessment	Document review, consultations with management, staff and representative member OPDs; Communications Assessment Report	Weeks 1 to 3 30 Nov to 18 Dec 2026
3. Development of drafts	Communications Strategy and Action Plan, Branding Framework and Brand Guidelines,	Weeks 3 to 7 14 Dec 2026 to 15 Jan

Phase	Main activities	Timeframe
	Communications Policy, Communications Toolkit and Editorial and Style Guide	2027
4. Validation	Review of drafts by ADF, validation workshop	Weeks 7 to 8 11 to 22 Jan 2027
5. Finalization and orientation	Revision of all documents, submission of final deliverables, staff orientation session	Weeks 9 to 10 25 Jan to 5 Feb 2027

7. Approach and Cross-cutting Requirements

- **Participation:** the assignment shall follow the principle of "nothing about us without us". Persons with disabilities, ADF members and staff shall be actively involved in consultations and validation.
- **Accessibility:** all consultations, materials and deliverables shall be accessible to persons with different types of disabilities. Brand guidelines and templates shall meet recognized accessibility standards (e.g. WCAG 2.1 AA for digital products).
- **Language:** the framework shall take into account ADF's multilingual context (English, French, Arabic and Portuguese) and be usable across language versions.
- **Gender and diversity:** messaging, imagery and storytelling guidance shall reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities, including women, youth and under-represented disability groups.
- **Safeguarding and consent:** the consultant shall comply with ADF's safeguarding, data protection and consent requirements, particularly for photography, video and personal stories.

8. Management and Reporting Arrangements

- The consultant will work under the overall supervision of the ADF Secretariat, through the Senior Communication Officer, Advocacy and Communication Director, and in close collaboration with the Online knowledge and Communications intern.
- The Senior Communication Officer will review deliverables, coordinate feedback from ADF, and approve deliverables for payment.
- The consultant shall hold progress calls with the Advocacy and Communication Director and the Senior Communication Officer every two weeks and report any risk to the timeline immediately.
- ADF will provide: relevant organizational documents and existing communication materials; access to staff, members and partners for consultations; coordination and logistics of the validation workshop and staff orientation; and sign language and language interpretation where required.

- The consultant will provide their own equipment, software, internet connection and workspace.

9. Required Qualifications and Experience

- Proven track record in strategic communications, organizational branding, and communications policy development.
- The lead consultant shall have at least seven years of relevant professional experience in strategic or institutional communications, branding or communications consultancy.
- Demonstrated completion of at least three similar assignments for NGOs, development organizations, regional/continental bodies, or other comparable institutions, with samples of previous work.
- Strong demonstrated expertise in developing communications strategies, branding frameworks and guidelines, communications policies, editorial/style guides, and communications toolkits.
- Demonstrated expertise in disability-inclusive, accessible and rights-based communications, including accessible document and template development. Direct experience working with OPDs or disability-rights organisations is an advantage.
- The consultant, or the proposed team in the case of a firm, should possess expertise in strategic communications, branding/visual identity, digital communications, editorial development, accessibility, and communications governance.
- Excellent analytical, writing, facilitation, design, and stakeholder engagement capabilities.
- Full working proficiency in English; working knowledge of French is an asset.
- Experience working with African regional or continental organizations is an added advantage.

Persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. ADF will provide reasonable accommodation on request at any stage of the process.

10. Application Procedure

Interested applicants, individual consultants or consultancy firms, shall submit the following documents in a single email:

- **Technical proposal** (maximum 10 pages): understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology and approach to stakeholder consultation, approach to accessibility, and a detailed work plan within the two-and-a-half-month period.
- **Financial proposal** in USD: daily rate(s) and number of days, total lump sum, and any other costs, inclusive of all taxes. The financial proposal shall be valid for 60 days from the submission deadline.
- **CV(s)** (maximum 3 pages each): CV of the consultant or, for a firm, CVs of the proposed team members indicating the role of each person in the assignment.

- **Samples of previous work**: at least three comparable products (communications strategy, brand guidelines, communications policy or toolkit), as files or links.
- **References**: contact details of three clients for whom similar assignments were completed.

Applications shall be sent to jobs@adf-secretariat.org with the subject line "Communications Consultancy_ADF" no later than 14 November 2026, 5:00 PM East Africa Time (EAT).

Applications received after the deadline or missing any of the required documents will not be considered. Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted. Shortlisted applicants may be invited to present their proposal to the evaluation committee.

11. Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals will be evaluated by an ADF evaluation committee in two stages: technical evaluation first, followed by financial evaluation. Only proposals scoring at least 70 out of 100 points in the technical evaluation will have their financial proposal opened.

Technical evaluation

Criterion	Maximum points
Experience and track record of the consultant in communications strategies, branding and communications policies	20
Quality and relevance of the proposed methodology and work plan	25
Qualifications and experience of the consultant or proposed team	20
Quality of samples of previous work, including design of brand guidelines and templates	15
Experience in accessible and disability-inclusive communications, and with OPDs	15
Experience with African regional or continental organizations	5
Total	100

Financial evaluation

The lowest-priced proposal among those that passed the technical evaluation will receive a financial score of 100. Other proposals will receive a score calculated as follows:

Sf = 100 x Fm / F, where Sf is the financial score of the proposal under consideration, Fm is the price of the lowest-priced proposal, and F is the price of the proposal under consideration.

Final score

The final score will combine the technical score (70%) and the financial score (30%). The contract will be awarded to the applicant with the highest combined score.

12. Payment and Contractual Terms

The contract will be output-based, with a lump sum payable in USD by bank transfer according to the schedule below, upon written approval of the deliverables by ADF and receipt of a valid invoice:

Instalment	Condition	Percentage
1	Approval of the Inception Report (Deliverable 1)	20%
2	Approval of the Communications Assessment Report and all draft documents (Deliverables 2 to 6)	40%
3	Approval of the validation report, final documents and completion of the staff orientation (Deliverables 7 to 9)	40%

- Payments will be made within 30 days of approval of the deliverable and receipt of the invoice.
- Costs of the validation workshop logistics, interpretation and any travel requested by ADF are covered separately by ADF and shall not be included in the financial proposal.
- All documents, templates, designs, source files and other products developed under this assignment are the exclusive property of ADF. The consultant may not use, publish or share them without prior written authorization from ADF.
- The consultant shall treat all information received from ADF as confidential.