



African Network for Women in Astronomy (AfNWA)

Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Background

Astronomy and space sciences are currently experiencing significant growth in Africa. The African Network of Women in Astronomy (AfNWA) is an initiative that aims to connect women working in astronomy and related fields in Africa as well as generate enthusiasm for girls and women to consider a career in astronomy. It was established in September 2020 as a committee of AfAS. The goal of AfNWA is to facilitate the future participation of girls and women at all levels in astronomy and science developments in Africa. The committee works to improve the status of women in science in Africa and uses astronomy to inspire more girls to do STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). The AfNWA objectives cannot be achieved without the full support and participation of the entire astronomy community of Africa and beyond, independent of gender and location.

2. AfNWA main objectives

- 2.1. To strengthen and promote female participation in astronomy in Africa,
- 2.2. To bring together women who work in astronomy in Africa,
- 2.3. To strengthen the links between female researchers through the sharing of information, strengthening collaborations, etc.,
- 2.4. To strengthen support and supervision between senior and young female astronomers,
- 2.5. To find ways to retain women in astronomy,
- 2.6. To promote astronomy, space science, and science in general among young girls by empowering them to do science,
- 2.7. To give more visibility to the work that female astronomers are doing in Africa and that African female astronomers are doing around the globe,
- 2.8. To strengthen the research and leadership capacities of female astronomers,
- 2.9. To ensure female participation in the current and future developments of astronomy and science in Africa.

3. AfNWA main commitments

AfNWA annual activities shall be aligned with the above objectives and the following commitments:

- 3.1. Creating and maintaining a network of women in astronomy on the continent.

3.2. Organising courses and training for improving research and leadership skills of women in astronomy in Africa.

3.3 Giving visibility to women in astronomy and related fields in Africa through yearly published reports, newsletters, website, organisation of public talks, public communications, etc.

3.4 Facilitating the development of a professional path for women in astronomy and related fields in Africa.

3.5 Supporting research activities of women in astronomy and related fields through the supervision of MSc and PhD female students, joint research projects, grant proposals, etc.

3.6 Organising annual awards for early-career and senior female researchers in astronomy and related fields in Africa.

3.7 Organising and participating in outreach and public awareness activities to promote science through astronomy and inspire more girls to do STEM fields.

4. Composition of AfNWA Committee

4.1. The Committee shall comprise **of at least five members**, the majority of whom **(at least 3-4)** shall be independent non-executive committee members of AfAS.

4.2. The Committee members should be representative of the geographical regions in Africa (e.g. northern, southern, western, eastern). Gender diversity is welcome, and men shall be encouraged to join the Committee.

4.3 The Committee, if having the majority of votes, has the right to change the Committee members due to their inactivity, and/or invite new members to join depending on the needs **at any time during the term.** Any change shall be communicated to the Secretariat and AfAS EXCO.

4.4 The members of the Committee must collectively have sufficient qualifications and experience to ensure that the objectives and annual operating plan of AfNWA are achieved. The members shall be PhD holders in astronomy or related fields or above the second year of their PhD studies. The majority of members shall be PhD holders.

4.5 Only members of the Committee have the right to attend Committee meetings, however, other individuals may be invited to attend all or part of any Committee meeting as and when appropriate but as observers and/or advisors. However, invited members do not vote on resolutions or form part of the quorum for Committee meetings.

4.6 A quorum of the Committee shall be more than 50%. A duly convened meeting of the Committee at which a quorum is present shall be competent to exercise all or any of the duties and responsibilities exercisable by the Committee.

4.7. In the absence of the Committee Chair, the members present may nominate and elect one of their members to chair the meeting.

4.8. The AfAS Secretariat shall be the secretary to the Committee.

5. Minutes and meeting papers

5.1. The Secretary shall minute the proceedings and decisions of all Committee meetings, including recording the names of those in attendance.

5.2. The Secretary shall circulate the minutes of Committee meetings to all members of the Committee within 5 days.

6. Frequency of meetings

6.1. The Committee shall meet at least six (6) times per annum or as otherwise required or determined by the Chair or at the request of a Committee member.

6.2. Outside of meetings, all communication between AfNWA members shall take place through email to ensure all committee members are kept up to date with all AfNWA work and discussions.

7. Reporting Responsibilities

7.1. The Committee Chair shall report on the committee's activities at the AfAS Quarterly report back meeting with the AfAS EXCO.

7.2. The Committee shall make whatever recommendations to the AfAS Executive Committee it seems appropriate in respect of any area within its remit where action or improvement is needed.

7.3. A formal report on the Committee's activities and how it has discharged its duties and responsibilities shall be included in the Quarterly Reports to the Secretariat of AfAS.

7.4. The Committee's Terms of Reference shall be made available on the AfAS and AfNWA websites.

8. Review

- 8.1. These terms of reference may, from time to time, be revised and modified by a resolution of the Committee, subject to the approval of the AfAS Executive Committee.
- 8.2. The effectiveness and membership of the African Network for Women in Astronomy (AfNWA) Committee will be reviewed by the AfAS Executive Committee when the need arises.

9. Term of Office

- 10.1. The Term of Office of the Committee members will run parallel to that of the AfAS Executive Committee members (3 years).
- 10.2. At the end of the term of office of the current Committee, for the purposes of continuity, approximately half of the Committee should be replaced by new membership.
- 10.3. The Committee Chair shall be elected every term, and the Committee Chair can serve more than one term.