Rwandan officials and gender advocates are urging more women to contest upcoming local elections, warning that low representation at grassroots leadership levels continues to hinder inclusive development.

The call was made Thursday during a meeting of the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), Rwanda chapter, where participants highlighted persistent gaps despite the country's global recognition for gender equality in governance.

Dr. Uwizeye Odette, director general of the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA), said women remain underrepresented in both elected and competitive positions, particularly at lower administrative levels.

She attributed the gap to limited access to information, the burden of unpaid domestic work and lingering societal perceptions that leadership roles are better suited to men.



Rwanda's Constitution guarantees at least 30% representation of women in decision-making organs. RALGA data shows women currently hold 44.49% of elected positions, but only about 33% of competitive posts.

Representation drops further in key local roles, with women making up around 28% of sector executive secretaries and just 15% of deputy mayors in charge of economic development.

Umutoni Gatsinzi Nadine, head of the Gender Monitoring Office, said the underrepresentation of women at local levels is limiting their economic advancement, pointing to challenges such as restricted access to finance.

With local elections expected later this year, National Electoral Commission chairperson Oda Gasinzigwa called on women to participate in large numbers, emphasizing that the country has capable candidates ready to lead.

Gender Minister Uwimana Consolée urged women already in leadership to serve as role models and encouraged others to step forward, saying greater participation would help inspire future generations and strengthen inclusive governance.