



## UNDEF Transmittal of Independent Evaluation Report / Management Response

Below is an external independent evaluation report commissioned and paid for by the United Nations Democracy Fund, UNDEF, in accordance with the Fund's contribution agreement with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

The report was commissioned on the basis of Terms of Reference drafted by UNDEF in consultation with Sida. UNDEF contracted two consultants, under the United Nations General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors, to undertake the activities and deliver the outputs stated in the Terms of Reference.

In transmitting the report, UNDEF makes the following observations:

- The Terms of Reference called for an evaluation focusing on UNDEF's results achieved, effectiveness, progression and comparative advantage as a democracy support actor over the past 10 years.
- UNDEF appreciates the positive assessment of UNDEF's work and conclusions of the report, which highlight UNDEF's relevance, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, clear comparative advantage and sustainable results.
- The report contains some interesting recommendations. Several dovetail with efforts already being undertaken by UNDEF. These include reworking and refining UNDEF's results framework (relates to Rec 1); introducing a theory of change segment in the design of each new UNDEF-funded project (relates to Rec 1); working more closely with members of the UNDEF Advisory Board throughout the year, in between meetings, including on themes for UNDEF focus and support for efforts to fund projects in challenging environments (relates to Rec 2); briefing civil society side events at UN system meetings to share lessons learned and best practices (relates to Rec 4); conducting selected continuations and sequels of especially prioritized or relevant projects, but without making four-year projects the norm (relates to Rec 6); developing an interactive mechanism to harvest and collate project impact, lessons learned and best practices to be shared with practitioners, Governments, researchers, academia (relates to Recs 11, 13); producing an annual outreach publication on impact and integrating it into a structured fundraising strategy (relates to Recs 15, 16).
- A number of the report's more unusual recommendations may be based on an overly expansive view of the role UNDEF can or should play in the UN system, or an overly optimistic view of the UN's intergovernmental machinery: for example, the suggestion that UNDEF should provide regular briefings to the General Assembly and the Security Council; or include in UNDEF's internal UN advisory group a representative of the Human Rights Council, a highly politicized intergovernmental body; or engage the UN NGO Committee, a controversial UN headquarters entity largely concerned with accreditation, as a forum for discussing political civil society issues.
- Other recommendations disregard the fact that UNDEF, as a Secretariat entity and a Secretary-General's Trust Fund, is obliged to operate within UN policy frameworks, including the Financial Rules and Regulations and the Staff Rules and Regulations. For example, a recommendation to outsource parts of

UNDEF project management to an external civil society organization would be neither administratively possible, nor politically desirable, since outsourcing would fail to make use of the universality and legitimacy of UNDEF as UN organization.

- The consultants describe their overall approach as “to encourage learning and to foster positive change”, and saw their work as “an intervention in and of itself”. While this approach was not in contradiction with the Terms of Reference, it resulted in a tendency to judge UNDEF against benchmarks that do not exist under UNDEF’s mandate, mission and activities.
- Although the report’s title is *Evaluation of the United Nations Democracy Fund, 2006-2016*, many perceptions are drawn from a snapshot in time covering two months in 2016. Thus, the report does not reflect ongoing work such as UNDEF resource mobilization that led to a significant increase in contributions to the Fund in 2016; critical strengthening of UNDEF staffing; reworking of the UNDEF results framework to reflect more qualitative impact and results; a new strategy for evaluating individual projects, focusing on enhancing in-house knowledge management; and systematizing lessons learned in an interactive web-resource of aggregated lessons learned and best practice across all evaluated projects.
- One of overall points UNDEF takes issue with is the notion of a contradiction between supporting civil society organizations and supporting projects. UNDEF’s mission is based on the conviction that it is possible, desirable and necessary to support both; that supporting a project brings support for the organization, and vice versa. The report also states that UNDEF is not aware of its impact in the field; however, UNDEF’s project officers are highly attuned to the impact of their projects through project visits, as well as regular reporting and monitoring from the field, both from beneficiaries and from the UN system. UNDEF’s draws on these inputs and lessons as a learning tool and outreach resource in UNDEF’s wider work.
- The report makes several references to UNDEF’s low profile, including the institutional placement of UNDEF in the UN Office for Partnerships rather than on the “political side of the house”. This institutional placement of UNDEF was a decision taken by then Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan, not a choice by UNDEF. It brings a range of advantages for UNDEF, including relative autonomy from vested political interests in the rest of the UN system -- as deemed appropriate for a Secretary-General’s trust fund -- as well as co-resourcing and cost-effectiveness. Elsewhere, the report concedes that UNDEF’s low profile and quiet diplomacy are particularly effective in negotiating projects in challenging environments.
- The report further states that UNDEF avoids making “too much noise”. UNDEF communicates widely about most of its projects through newsletters, website, social media, television documentaries, presentations in meetings and conferences. However, there are a few aspects of UNDEF’s work where making “noise” would be counter-productive and possibly damaging to UNDEF’s efforts and beneficiaries in the field.
- Some of the report’s findings and perceptions disregard UNDEF’s financial accountability obligations to the UN system and to UNDEF’s donors. For example, the report cites as a negative that UNDEF “has one of the most complex and time-consuming systems of audit and control the evaluators have ever seen”. However, during the same time as the evaluation was conducted, two institutional reviews of UNDEF undertaken by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and the UN Board of Auditors noted the importance of even more detailed financial oversight and due diligence, while recognizing UNDEF’s strong performance in this area.
- The report states that UNDEF’s project selection process excludes proposals from the weakest organizations. In fact, UNDEF strives at all times to strike a careful balance between supporting local, less well-known organizations, and ensuring that those chosen will have the technical capacity to implement

the project they propose. The report further states that UNDEF should be more flexible in allowing beneficiaries to revise the project document and adjust the budget. UNDEF does provide this flexibility to beneficiaries, where the context requires it, provided the adjustment is fully justified, documented and accounted for.

- The report states that UNDEF's Advisory Board meetings should be more "substantive" and "do not create space for discussions about democracy, civil society or the challenges faced by either". Again, UNDEF has a duty to strike a balance, in the limited time available to Member States on its Board, between the oversight duties of the Board and the scope for substantive discussions. Thus, there is indeed at every Board meeting a discussion about increasing challenges faced by civil society, UNDEF's constituency. To make the Board meeting a forum for wide-ranging discussions about the state of democracy in the world as a whole is neither possible nor appropriate.

**The following report is the work of independent evaluators. UNDEF takes no responsibility for the accuracy or opinions expressed in the document.**

**Evaluation of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)  
2006-2016**

**September 2016**

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ACABQ</b>	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DM</b>	United Nations Department of Management
<b>DPA</b>	Department of Political Affairs
<b>DPKO</b>	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
<b>ECOSOC</b>	UN Economic and Social Council
<b>EOSG</b>	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
<b>GA</b>	General Assembly (UN)
<b>IRI</b>	International Republican Institute
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum Of Understanding
<b>NDI</b>	National Democratic Institute
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OEDC</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PBSO</b>	Peacebuilding Support Office
<b>PCG</b>	Programme Consultative Group
<b>PWDs</b>	People With Disabilities
<b>RBM</b>	Result Based Management
<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>Sida</b>	Swedish international development cooperation agency
<b>SMART</b>	Specific Measurable Assignable Realistic Time-related (indicators)
<b>TBD</b>	To Be Determined
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UNDEF</b>	United Nation Democracy Fund
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNMIL</b>	United Nation Mission in Liberia
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UNOP</b>	United Nations Office for Partnerships
<b>XB</b>	Extra-budgetary funding

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## Executive Summary

This independent, external evaluation of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) forms part of an agreement between UNDEF and the Swedish international development cooperation agency (Sida), which has supported the Fund in the context of a multi-year agreement since 2012. The evaluation responds to Sida's request for insights on the results achieved by, and the effectiveness of, UNDEF – including its strengths, weaknesses, lessons learnt and comparative advantage. The key purpose of this evaluation is to facilitate a **comprehensive, impartial and honest reflection of UNDEF's work**; contrary to an audit, therefore, which tends to focus more on ensuring *accountability* for funds spent this evaluation is designed to promote *learning* and *advancement* towards UNDEF's core goals. At the heart of the evaluation is the following question: To what extent has, and to what extent *could* UNDEF optimise its structures, working methods, available resources, relationships, processes, behaviours and position within the UN System to most effectively achieve its mandate? To summarize: on its tenth anniversary - and given that this is the first ever evaluation of UNDEF

- the report seeks to reflect on fundamental, strategic questions about how the Fund is working, what it has achieved to date, and how it can maximise its impact moving forward.

Conducted over the course of six months by two senior consultants, the evaluation focuses on three key dimensions: UNDEFs governance, management and financial structures and processes, including UNDEFs position within the UN System; its operations and outputs, and an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the processes managed by UNDEF; and, the outputs and results (and where possible, outcomes) of the projects funded by UNDEF. The **methodology was designed to be comprehensive and participatory**; it included: a comprehensive desk review; focus groups and interviews with UNDEF staff; interviews with over 20 New York-based stakeholders; analysis of 50 UNDEF funded projects; two, on-line questionnaires, completed by 360 grantees; and, 20 case studies, conducted in ten countries. The evaluation is underpinned by the OECD-DAC principles, and complemented by analysis of UNDEFs coherence, and comparative advantage. An evaluation of this scope is not without challenges, which must be taken into consideration when reading this report, including: the impossibility of covering all 600 projects in over 100 countries; limited number of days and, due to UNDEF's size, limited logistical support; the fact that the conditions for analysing impact were not met; the impossibility of ensuring sampling that is statistically representative; the need to respect the anonymity of all those who engaged in his process; and, the challenges of encapsulating the richness of our findings in a relatively short and concise report.

In terms of **relevance**, this evaluation found that the establishment of UNDEF in 2005 was highly appropriate – if somewhat overdue – since its mandate goes to the very heart of why the UN was founded. The values and principles it embodies are encapsulated in the preamble of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it is in line with calls from Member States to promote and consolidate democracies. It fills a significant niche in the UN system, as the only UN actor actively furthering democratization processes by providing direct support to civil society actors, in an otherwise Member state-oriented UN System. UNDEF has become increasingly relevant due to: increasing levels of distrust between civil society and Member States; the SDGs, which resonate with UNDEFs mandate; UNDEFs ability to avoid 'mission creep'. Despite its high relevance, it has a surprisingly low profile, explained in part by its position in the UN Office for Partnerships, rather than on the political side of the house, and in part by the low priority given by Member States to democracy support. Many stakeholders believe its low profile is a deliberate choice, chosen to allow UNDEF to take a 'quiet diplomacy' approach to its work. Amongst grantees, 99% of those surveyed believe UNDEF plays a relevant role in advancing democratization in their country, and 67% believe UNDEF's work is 'excellent' thanks to technical support offered by UNDEF, and high levels

of local ownership for projects. However, the project-oriented' philosophy of UNDEF presents a contradiction in UNDEF's work: if UNDEF is to remain at a two-year timeframe, it should become 'CSO-oriented', building CSO capacity to outlive donor funding cycles; however, if UNDEF wishes to remain 'project-oriented', it will need to re-think its two-year funding cycle.

Analysing the **effectiveness** of UNDEF is challenging, since it lacks a robust Results Framework and has no Theory of Change both of which - according to the United Nations Evaluation Group - normally forms the backbone against which an Organization is assessed. The absence of these 'tools' leads to some discrepancy amongst both internal and external stakeholders about what UNDEF does and how, why and to what effect. Assuming, however, that UNDEF is a 'project-oriented' entity offering some capacity-building, it has clearly put in place highly effective management mechanisms; over 99% of grantees report that support was essential for them to achieve their goals. Despite this high figure, grantees point to several areas where the call for proposals; application, guidance, implementation processes; 'milestones'; and, evaluations could be improved. Due to the fact that UNDEF does not maintain relationships with grantees after projects closure, and because evaluations are conducted at project closure, it is difficult to make global conclusions about project effectiveness. However, field visits suggest that UNDEF has supported impressive CSOs implementing targeted projects, with meaningful results and – in some cases – interesting outcomes. UNDEF's effectiveness could be improved by finding a way to use the vast knowledge and expertise of the 600+ grantees it has at its fingertips to the advantage of the UN System in which it is embedded; UNDEF currently lacks a mechanism to ensure CSO concerns can be brought to the attention of UN entities best placed to address them.

New York stakeholders consistently state their appreciation of UNDEF's **efficiency**, and its "extremely rigorous and well-managed" project selection process, which involves extensive engagement with UN entities and members of the Advisory Board. One relatively unknown aspect of UNDEF's work is its extensive 'quiet diplomacy' engagements with Member States who may be hesitant to support civil society; led predominantly by UNDEF's Executive Head, this process allows UNDEF to create 'entry points' for CSO support in countries where many other actors cannot. UNDEF is, therefore, in a unique position to support small CSOs that other donors may not be willing/able to fund, and is in a position to try out innovative approaches to fostering democracy – not least given its rigorous audit processes. There are concerns that the criteria for selecting projects tends to favour stronger local CSOs, over and above 'weaker' ones which may have good ideas. On the financial side, UNDEF's expenditures are cost-efficient, and its total operational costs equal only 16.2% of the total expenditure, including both administrative and M&E related costs. The organization, however, is overstretched, which has impacts on its ability to be effective; it has only seven staff positions, out of which four programme officers are dealing with 50 projects at any given time, which constitutes a huge undertaking, and reduces the UNDEF's ability to maximise the results and impact of its work. UNDEF's governance structure is robust and representative, but under-utilised; almost all Advisor Board members believe the format, content and modalities of their interaction with UNDEF could be more substantive and interactive. Lastly, 61% of grantees perceived UNDEF support as 'excellent' and 28% as 'good' and the majority appreciate UNDEF's responsiveness.

Given the absence of a results framework, TOC and baselines, limited timeframe and budget, and the complexity of dealing with multiple contexts, themes and diverse contexts, it was not possible to conduct an evaluation of overall **impact**. Consequently, as outlined in the inception report, the evaluators opted for a retrospective analysis based on the perceptions of stakeholders obtained through the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Overall, UNDEF has become more streamlined, but the need is greater than UNDEF's capacity to respond: from Round 1-9, the number of applications received doubled from 1303 in Round 1

to 2664 in Round 9, but the number of projects approved and receiving funding, however has been steadily decreasing: from 125 in Round 1, to 69 in Round 3, and 49, 53, and 52 in Round 7, 8 and 9 respectively. In the field, 98% of grantees surveyed believe UNDEF's support had a positive effect on their projects and 94% believe their project contributed to democratisation in their country; these results display little variability across the years and only marginal variability across regions. Field visits confirmed these positive perceptions: almost all grantees visited benefited immensely from the guidance process offered by UNDEF on project design; the impact on beneficiaries has invariably been profound; and, anecdotal evidence concerning the perceptions of impact at a broader level suggest impressive results. UNDEF, however, could improve impact at the field level by: connecting UNDEF grantees in-country; facilitating learning between CSOs in different countries; being more flexible and nimble; serving as a bridge between civil society and the rest of the UN System; and, revising the two-year time frame, considered by almost all grantees to be insufficient to sustain meaningful results. The most important finding, however, remains that UNDEF is not aware of its impact at the field level due to a monitoring and evaluation system that focuses on accountability, not learning, and which uses post-project evaluations as the predominant tool for assessing projects.

Since UNDEF does not remain in contact with the 600+ former grantees, it is difficult to know which are still active ('inactive' grantees were unlikely to respond to our survey). The case studies indicate, however, that, for smaller CSOs especially, UNDEF funding has provided instrumental building blocks for their development. Many have since gone onto use the technical skills to apply for funds from other donors, and UNDEF support has often provided a 'stamp of approval' in the eyes of beneficiaries and governments alike. UNDEF support on project design is necessary but insufficient to ensure grantee **sustainability** – since project design is only one aspect of a successful CSO's life's-span. Out of those surveyed, 68% of projects funded by UNDEF are still active, but this takes into account projects from Rounds 7-9 that are on-going, and/or undergoing closure; combined with the fact that 32% of projects are inactive, this suggests that at least two thirds of projects were not sustained once UNDEF support ceased. Case studies demonstrate, however, that while projects themselves suffer from sustainability issues (and tend to finish when UNDEF funding finishes), the impacts of the projects on beneficiaries tend to be long-lasting. The knowledge and skills imparted to beneficiaries during the course of project implementation do not "suddenly disappear", as stated by several beneficiaries – especially since projects tend to impact individuals in profoundly meaningful, and often profoundly personal ways. Generally speaking, the two-year timeframe and lack of support beyond project design impedes sustainability. There are significant concerns about the sustainability of UNDEF itself, since annual contributions have been diminishing since UNDEF's inception, and because UNDEF does not have a robust fundraising or communications strategy; UNDEF's executive Head is well placed to play a leadership role in both these domains, but there are many competing pressures on her time.

The issue of **coherence** raises an important question: To what extent can and should UNDEF – as the only entity that provides direct support to civil society actors – be 'coherent' within a UN System dominated by Member State-led processes? In this regard, the evaluators believe that UNDEF's current approach of ensuring projects are CSO-generated, but selected to some degree on the basis of their coherence within the UN System through the PCG is the right approach. UNDEF's coherence is therefore, epitomised by the *complementary* role it plays within the UN System - complementing the democracy-oriented work of a multitude of other UN actors, but from the perspective of civil society. Where the organisation does not fulfil its potential regarding its efforts to be coherent, however, is attributed to the absence of a feedback mechanism between what is happening in the field with regards to civil society, human rights violations and government restrictions, and the UN System. UNDEF misses an

important opportunity to ensure its unrivalled access to CSOs – CSOs which appear to trust UNDEF over and above other UN entities - translates into actionable information for UN actors across the System best placed to respond. There is also greater scope for collaboration with the peacebuilding architecture; the NGO Committee; the Human Right Council; regional organizations and other democracy-promoting entities and academia; and, at the field level, UN counterparts could be assisting CSOs in diverse ways beyond the ‘milestone’ events. Encouragingly, 35% of survey respondents in the field indicate that UNDEF’s work on democratization is much better than that of comparable organisations, although grantees point to many areas where UNDEF’s work could be improved.

In terms of **comparative advantage**, UNDEF exhibits traits that it can use to fulfil its mandate to an even higher degree in the months and years ahead, including that: it’s ‘unique-ness’; grass-roots driven; able to strengthen capacity *and* ownership; has privileged access to local contexts; promotes government involvement; proactive, not reactive; has unrivalled access to knowledge and networks; is highly organised, efficient, and responsive; well-positioned to nurture dialogue; and trusted by CSOs. The **lessons learnt and best practices**, too numerous and diverse to list here, also demonstrate that UNDEF indeed, as one New York stakeholder stated, is “full of hidden gems”. The evaluators therefore **conclude** that, so far, UNDEF has created invaluable spaces for CSOs to foster democratic processes. After ten years of creating a robust, well-oiled machine, it is now time for UNDEF to tell its “story of brilliance” and put its “gems” to good use. In the words of one key stakeholder, it is time to “transition from donor to ally”. The evaluators agree that UNDEF is working in a sensitive context and acknowledge that changes to its working methods will require significant, concerted support - and funds - from the Advisory Board, UN colleagues in the PCG and the UN Secretary-General – and of course from Sida. It is a good moment for UNDEF to integrate more fully into the UN System, and to direct all its resources to fostering learning, collaboration and impact at the grass-roots level, and to raising awareness, fostering dialogue and triggering action at Headquarters, whether amongst Advisory Board members, stakeholders in the GA and the Security Council, or amongst Secretariat and non-Secretariat partners. Consequently, the evaluators **recommend** UNDEF to:

1. Conduct an internal reflection process (internal to UNDEF, and with key partners/collaborators) concerning UNDEF’s objectives and tools.
2. Revise and reform engagements with, and modalities of, the Advisory Board
3. Revise and reform engagements with, and modalities of, the PCG
4. Identify opportunities for engagement with the GA, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, ECOSOC and the NGO Committee
5. Adapt the selection process to ensure weaker CSOs with innovative ideas are rewarded
6. Extend project timelines from two years to four with a mid-term evaluation
7. Revise the templates for concept notes and project documents to enhance coherence and effectiveness
8. Outsource the guidance process to a CSO (as a “project”)
9. Develop a guidance process related to project implementation and management
10. Integrate CSO support into the budget awarded
11. Develop a comprehensive knowledge-management system
12. Create an annual competition and conference for UNDEF grantees
13. Develop thematic publications and partnerships with academia
14. Identify (and appoint) a Special Envoy or SRSG for enhancing the inclusiveness of democratization processes
15. Develop a multi-faceted fundraising strategy
16. Develop a multi-faceted communications strategy
17. Address diverse minor issues to improve overall performance (listed in body of report).

## I. Introduction

### Overview

1. This external evaluation of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) **forms part of an agreement between UNDEF and the Swedish international development cooperation agency (Sida)**, which has supported the Fund in the context of a multi-year agreement since 2012. Conducted over the course of six months (April-September) by two senior, independent consultants, the evaluation responds to Sida's request for insights on the results achieved by, and the effectiveness of, UNDEF – including its strengths, weaknesses, lessons learnt and comparative advantage. While specifically requested by Sida, it is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this evaluation will be of interest to: all members of the Advisory Board – past, present and future; the representatives of the Programme Consultative Group (PCG); colleagues across the UN System; grantees and beneficiaries; diverse partners; international development practitioners; and, other relevant stakeholders. Consequently, since this report will be made public in the same spirit of transparency that UNDEF has pioneered within the UN in recent years, it has been written with this broader audience in mind - with a view to maximising the usefulness of the findings and the insights for all those interested in supporting the voice of civil society actors specifically, and promoting the values of democracy more broadly.
2. The key purpose of this evaluation is to facilitate a comprehensive, impartial and honest reflection of UNDEF's work; contrary to an audit, therefore, which tends to focus more on ensuring *accountability* for funds spent – of which UNDEF has had two in recent months<sup>1</sup> - **this evaluation is designed to promote learning and advancement towards UNDEF's core goals**. At the heart of the evaluation is the following question: To what extent has, and to what extent *could* UNDEF optimise its structures, working methods, available resources, relationships, processes, behaviours and position within the UN System to most effectively achieve its mandate? This question encapsulates a series of objectives outlined in the Terms of Reference (TOR) and which form part of this report, including an assessment of: UNDEF's management structure and its ability to work with other actors; its project selection criteria and processes; the performance and quality of UNDEF projects, and UNDEF's role in designing and managing them; UNDEF's approach to monitoring and evaluation, specifically in relation to sustainability of the Fund's knowledge and expertise; the outputs, outcomes, and where possible, perceptions of impact of UNDEF's work and its projects; and, an account of lessons learned and best practices that could improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its activities. To summarize: on its tenth anniversary - and given that this is the first ever evaluation of UNDEF - the report seeks to reflect on fundamental, strategic questions about how the Fund is working, what it has achieved to date, and how it can maximise its impact moving forward.

#### a. Methodology

3. Broadly speaking, the **evaluation methodology was oriented towards three major dimensions of UNDEF**. The first dimension includes its governance, management and financial structures and processes, including a deeper appreciation of the composition and role of the Advisory Board, the PCG, as well as UNDEF's relationship with United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP), the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and other relevant UN entities; consequently, this first dimension focuses on UNDEF's position in the UN system, and key elements related to HQ dynamics. The second

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<sup>1</sup> Both the Office of Internal Oversight and the Board of Auditors have recently undertaken audits of UNDEF.

dimension relates to its operations and outputs, and an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the processes managed directly and indirectly by UNDEF, including its communication and outreach strategy, the screening and selection process of projects submitted by grantees, guidance provided to CSO's during the transition from project selection to project implementation, as well as the facets of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process, and the database for project management. The third dimension concerns the outputs and results (and where possible, impact) of the projects funded by UNDEF, paying particular attention to the achievement (or otherwise) of tangible results for the grantees, and perceptions of impact amongst direct and indirect beneficiaries; this dimension of the methodology was designed to also elucidate key lessons learnt and best practices.

4. In order to gather and analyse information related to the above three dimensions, the evaluation team **elaborated a detailed methodology involving both primary and secondary data**, accumulated as a result of extensive desk studies, interviews, questionnaires and field visits. More specifically the evaluation entailed:
  - A comprehensive **desk review of all UNDEF-related documentation**, such as TORs, Reports of the Secretary-General, foundational documents, minutes of the Advisory reports, annual reports to donors, documents related to communication and outreach and relevant statistics, budgets, etc.
  - A visit to UN Headquarters to undertake **focus groups and interviews with UNDEF staff, and interviews with over 30 New York-based stakeholders** including: a wide range of Advisory Board members; UN entities such as the EOSG, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Women and other representatives from the entities that form part of the PCG; as well as other key stakeholders.
  - An **in-depth desk review of 50 projects funded by UNDEF**, selected to reflect diversity, according to: funding rounds (1 to 9/2006-2015); geographical regions (Latin America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East); activity areas (community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government); amounts awarded (75,000-300,000+/-); and, project/grantee performance (poor, satisfactory and above expectation) as decided by UNDEF staff members and indicated in the database.
  - **Two on-line questionnaires**: The first questionnaire was sent to all 600+ grantees, and included broad, largely multiple choice-related questions concerning their experience with UNDEF; over 286 responses were received (230 completed the questionnaire and 54 completed it partially and were disqualified). The second questionnaire targeted 100 grantees, including the 50 grantees selected for desk review, and those selected for case studies (see below); this questionnaire involved more open-ended, qualitative questions concerning the interaction between the grantee and UNDEF, and the effect UNDEF had on the organisation and its ability to achieve its goals. Over 74 grantees responded to this questionnaire (46 completed the questionnaire and 27 completed it partially and then were disqualified).
  - **Field-based case studies**, focused on results, impact and sustainability. The case studies were selected from Rounds 3 to 8 to ensure some degree of 'time-lapse'

between project closure and evaluation, but not so much that the grantee staff had dramatically evolved, or beneficiaries could no longer be identified. Case studies were also selected with a view to ensuring: two countries per region; the presence of at least two projects in-country from which the selection could be made; and, smaller/'reasonably'-sized countries where internal travel to visit beneficiaries was feasible. Lastly, countries were selected to ensure diverse 'democratic' contexts as determined by the *'Democracy Index 2015: Democracy in an age of anxiety'* formulated by the Economist Intelligence Unit; the report categorises countries as: 'authoritarian', 'hybrid', or 'flawed'. While the terms, methodology and bias of this report are highly debatable, it provided some additional criteria from which to select the countries in order to ensure an evaluation covering a wide range of political contexts. The evaluators conducted case studies of 20 UNDEF projects in ten countries, including: Guatemala; Colombia; Georgia; Moldova; Rwanda, Liberia; Lebanon; Jordan; Sri Lanka and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos).<sup>2</sup> 17 case studies involved extensive interaction with the grantees, and multiple focus groups with beneficiaries ranging from 4 to 30 people per focus group.<sup>3</sup> In total, the evaluators engaged with 89 representatives from grantees, and 251 ultimate beneficiaries (i.e. those targeted by the projects funded by UNDEF).

- An extensive period of **analysis and triangulation of findings and results**. This involved comparing, contrasting and substantiating findings from the New York interviews, focus groups and desk-based reviews with the questionnaires and field-based case studies in order to arrive at major findings with a view to then elaborating the comprehensive recommendations.
  - An opportunity for **UNDEF to reflect on and respond to** the findings of the evaluation. The evaluators then assessed these reflections and responses and included those that could be incorporated as long as they were in line with the findings of the evaluation. Significant effort was expended to ensure the report both reflected UNDEF's views on the findings, while respecting the independence and integrity of the evaluators; the evaluators would like to highlight that this was not a self-assessment nor an internal review, but an external, independent evaluation conducted as the request of a Member State/donor. Comments that could not be incorporated into the main text are therefore included as quotes in the footnotes.
5. In line with the TOR and the experience of the two evaluators, the **approach used for this evaluation was underpinned by the OECD-DAC principles** for evaluation of development assistance. The OECD-DAC criteria focus on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability; given the place of UNDEF within the UN System, and the work of other democracy-oriented development actors around the world, the evaluators also added 'coherence' to this list of criteria. Furthermore, an analysis of the comparative advantages of the Fund has also been included as per the TOR.
  6. As eluded to above, at the heart of the approach of the evaluators was a **commitment to learning and fostering positive change**. The evaluators view an evaluation as an intervention in of itself, and believe the large investment of funds and time, requires an approach that goes beyond retrospective analysis. Consequently, the evaluators, for example, used the focus groups with UNDEF staff to facilitate strategic discussions about

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<sup>2</sup> See Annex 7: Stakeholders engaged with for this evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Due to challenges in the field with locating and assembling beneficiaries, three out of the 20 case studies involved interactions with the grantees, and often with partners, but did not include beneficiaries. '17' therefore, refers to the comprehensive case studies, which involved interviews and focus groups with beneficiaries.

their future direction. Engagements with New York stakeholders, furthermore, beyond collecting vital information, were also used to answer – to the extent that it was possible – any pressing questions interviewees had about UNDEF and to shed light on the processes used for selecting and implementing projects.

7. Most importantly, however, the evaluators used their interventions with grantees to gather essential information about the interaction with UNDEF, while also seeking to advance the work of the grantee in question, or the principles of the UN. In Rwanda, for example, the evaluator facilitated a meeting between two UNDEF grantees that would benefit immensely from working together; they have since gone onto sign an MOU. In Lebanon and Jordan, youth beneficiaries were strongly encouraged to continue their work, independently of support from UNDEF. Similarly, the evaluators connected grantees in Jordan with those in Liberia, given the vast opportunities for an exchange of best practices. In Liberia, following focus groups with vulnerable women who indicated that their lives were in danger, the evaluator worked with local CSOs and UNDEF to inform UNMIL of the situation, which has since conducted a community meeting in the area to address insecurity issues related predominantly to national drug-trafficking – issues that were beyond the capacity of the CSOs in question. In Moldova, recent threats to the lives of journalists investigating cases of corruption was brought to the attention of evaluator who decided to facilitate contact with a grantee in Colombia, which developed an index on freedom of expression that could be of use to stakeholders in Moldova. Furthermore, whilst in Georgia, the evaluator discovered potentially useful similarities with a project in Rwanda and has since arranged for them to be in touch. In this way, the evaluators sought **to maximise the impact of the process, and to make the best possible use of resources invested, while wholeheartedly respecting the principles of the evaluation.**

#### ***Key challenges and constraints***

8. An evaluation of this scope and scale is not without challenges, and these challenges must be kept in mind while reviewing the major findings contained in this report. These challenges include:
  - **The vast breadth of UNDEF's work:** UNDEF is, in part, the sum of its various parts, which includes a highly complex UN system, and over 600 projects implemented by diverse entities over the course of 9 years in over 100 countries and across five regions. Evaluating all 600 projects and seeking the views of all 193 Member States would be immensely enriching, but remains beyond the scope of this evaluation.
  - **The timeframe:** Each evaluator was given 75 days over the course of six months to conduct the evaluation. This included days allocated to the elaboration of the inception report, background reading, desk-based analysis of 25 projects each, trips to New York, elaboration of on-line questionnaires, travel to five countries each, analysis of findings and write up of the report, as well as the process of incorporating comments; in short, the 75 days covered all activities related to the evaluation process, which dramatically reduced the depth into which the evaluators could delve into various topics that arose.
  - **Complex travel logistics and limited support:** The time constraints were particularly evident in the context of complex, multi-continent field-based Missions. Time constraints related to the number of days awarded for the entire evaluation dictated that the evaluators could spend only two days evaluating each project,

which meant spending half a day engaging with the grantee, half a day or an evening traveling to beneficiary locations, and one day engaging with focus groups and select interviewees. The evaluators were not paid for international travel, nor for days in-country when not engaging with grantees and beneficiaries; the evaluators were responsible for arranging their own schedules in-country and their own logistics – including visas, hotels, translators, all meetings and local transportation, which was particularly time-intensive and somewhat unexpected in light of the previous experience of both evaluators. The UNDEF Secretariat is extremely over-stretched and was not able, therefore, to assist.

- **Limits to the ability to evaluate impact:** Due to the aforementioned constraints and the fact the evaluating ‘impact’ requires a set of conditions not present for this evaluation (see Text Box Four), the evaluators ability to evaluate impact was limited. Impact refers to changes in the broader environment, which - short of evident policy changes, or the provision of new laws, for example - involves engaging with third parties i.e. stakeholders beyond the grantees and direct or even indirect beneficiaries. Given the time and financial constraints this was simply not possible. Assertions concerning impact therefore emanate from the grantees and beneficiaries and are *perception-oriented*, as outlined in the inception report; they are consequently subject to bias. More broadly speaking, due to the difficulty of inferring causality between small, specific projects and broader socio-political contexts, impact is notoriously difficult to evaluate.
- **Sampling:** In order for the sampling of case studies - for desk review and field visits - to be statistically representative with a margin of confidence of 95%, the evaluators needed to conduct 235 desk reviews and 235 field visits, which was evidently not possible. Consequently, projects for desk review and field visits were selected with a view to being qualitatively *as representative as possible*. The results of the first questionnaire can be considered statistically representative, however, and the results therefore indicative of the ‘whole universe’ of respondents.
- **Report length:** The TOR requests that the report be no longer than 40 pages. Consequently, the key findings are relatively high-level and significant effort has been expended to be as concise and precise as possible, sometimes at the expense of breadth or depth. The evaluators remain available to answer any questions. Following an extensive review process with UNDEF, an agreement was made to extend this page length limit in order to be able to incorporate more details concerning the field visits (in the form of text boxes), as well as UNDEF comments on the findings, as and where appropriate as decided by the evaluators. Incorporating these requests from UNDEF added around 15 pages to the report.
- **Quotations and respecting anonymity:** In line with best practices concerning evaluations, especially on sensitive topics, all interviews were conducted with a degree of anonymity. Quotations from stakeholders are included in double inverted commas (“x”), which refer to direct speech or a direct text quotation (single inverted commas, therefore, refer to expressions, terms or concepts, but not to direct speech ‘y’). As and where appropriate, the actor involved is referred to either as UNDEF itself; New York stakeholders; grantees; and/or beneficiaries. A list of all those engaged with in New York is listed under Annex 7; in line with commitments made to grantees and in order to protect them to the extent that is possible, no specific names are given; however, the names of the grantee institutions are listed along with the number of people engaged with at the CSOs in question, and in

terms of their direct beneficiaries (during focus groups, for example, or interviews). The rest of the text refers to the views, impressions and perceptions of the evaluators which are based in their entirety on the findings of this evaluation, garnered through the various instruments and research practices outlined under point 4, above. The evaluators do not express any views in this report – in substance or in tone – which are not in line with the findings of this report, or based entirely on the findings therein.

- **Selectivity:** The OECD-DAC principles are relatively arbitrary and so some duplication is unavoidable: findings never purely relate to one criteria alone. Significant effort has been made to include information in the relevant criteria, but this involves subjective choices, which also sometimes result in some information being excluded. Comprehensive annexes have been included where the information on which this report is based can also be found (almost) in its entirety.

### *Structure of this Report*

9. This report is organised into **six key sections**. Following this introduction, the report begins with some brief background information on UNDEF for all those who are not familiar with the entity, or who would like additional, specific information on its working arrangements; those who are already familiar with UNDEF should skip straight to the second section, which provides an overview of the major findings according to the methodology outlined above, including: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and coherence. In light of the TOR and questions raised by Member States during interviews, the evaluators have also included a specific section in these findings concerning UNDEF's comparative advantage. These findings draw directly upon the views of stakeholders, grantees and beneficiaries, and UNDEF-related documents. The third section provides some key insights regarding lessons learned and best practices, the majority of which are project and grantee-related. The fifth section provides conclusions of the report, focusing on the perceptions of the evaluators garnered as a result of the entire process; and, the sixth and final section of the report contains the recommendations.
10. Given the page limitations of this Report combined with the richness of the field visits, the evaluators made a decision to provide a **complementary document containing brief case studies as a supplement to this evaluation** - in addition to drawing upon them and referencing them where possible in the body of this Report; text boxes have also been included through the report to highlight key findings encapsulated in the 'Case Study Supplement'. This document contains 20 case studies which pay particular attention to results, sustainability, impact and lessons learnt emanating from UNDEF projects in Guatemala, Colombia, Georgia, Moldova, Rwanda, Liberia, Lebanon, Jordan, Sri Lanka and Laos; it should be noted that this document was not requested in the TOR, nor promised in the context of the inception report, but was produced on the evaluators own time (total 20 days)<sup>4</sup> on the basis of the belief that the richness of these findings cannot be conveyed in a report or this length, nor in the brevity of text boxes. The evaluators believe these case studies serve as excellent examples of the range of endeavours UNDEF supports, and of the vast knowledge that can be ascertained from an analysis of these projects. The evaluators therefore highly encourage those interested in gaining a better understanding of UNDEF to read the 'Case Study Supplement' carefully alongside this evaluation.

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<sup>4</sup>This included analysis of the findings of the field visits; write up; review by grantees; and incorporation of all comments.

## II. Background information: UNDEF

### *Founding and governance structure*

11. UNDEF's primary purpose is to **strengthen the voice of civil society and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes**; the Fund, therefore, complements the work of other UN actors to strengthen and expand democratization processes, through support for democratic dialogue, constitutional processes and civil society empowerment, including the empowerment of women, civic education and voter registration, citizen's access to information, participation rights and the rule of law in support of civil society and transparency and integrity. UNDEF is the only UN entity with the word 'democracy' in its title, and the only entity in the UN focused specifically on strengthening state-society relations through support to CSOs.
12. Former Secretary-General **Mr. Kofi Annan announced UNDEF's creation at the African Union summit in 2005** when Heads of State and governments reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, underscoring that it is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems, and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. Representatives also confirmed that "there is no single model for democracy", since it does not belong to any country or region. The Fund was, therefore, founded on the principles of impartiality and universal legitimacy; it also benefitted from the widespread recognition that democratic governance is crucial to the advancement of human development.
13. Located within the UNOP, UNDEF reports administratively to the Department of Management (DM), but project funding is approved by the EOSG. **UNDEF's governance structure comprises an Advisory Board, supported by an inter-agency working group.** The Advisory Board is appointed by the Secretary-General and comprises: the 7 largest funding states over the previous three years; six other Member States, ensuring geographical diversity; three individuals and two CSOs. The inter-agency working group, or PCG, is made up of 7 representatives from DPA, DPKO, UNDP, OHCHR, PBSO, UNODC and UN-Women. The PCG is chaired by DPA, since DPA's Director also chairs by the UN-wide Working Group on Democracy.
14. UNDEF is **headed by an Executive Head** who is responsible for ensuring substantive, technical, and logistical support to the Advisory Board and the PCG. She is supported by two Deputies and two programme officers (two P5, one P4 and one P3). The UNDEF Secretariat is responsible for: developing funding criteria in consultation with the PCG; soliciting and receiving proposals on the basis of guidelines approved by the Board; reviewing project proposals for submission to the Board; negotiating project documents with UNDEF grantees, providing guidance and supervision during the course of the project; conducting outreach activities; facilitating in-kind donations from Member States and NGOs; arranging M&E, as well as audit exercises; handling all aspects of the allocation, disbursement and accounting of funds; and, submitting reports to the ACABQ and Fifth Committee of the GA, as and when required.

### *Project selection process*

15. UNDEF **offers grants to CSOs in all five regions of the world** (Latin America, Europe, Africa, Middle East and Asia-Pacific) on an annual basis; funding is distributed relatively equally between Asia/Pacific, Europe and Latin America, but higher in Arab states and

almost double in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Applicants submit proposals in a wide range of activity areas, including: community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government. Typically, funding is between \$100,000-\$300,000, and projects usually last two years. Since 2007, UNDEF has prioritised funding in key activity areas in line with the priorities of the UN System; Round 9, for example, focused on youth engagement, whereas this year focused on the SDGs. UNDEF also provides limited funding for 'regional projects', implemented in more than one country, as well as global projects.<sup>6</sup>

16. Approximately 3000 applications are received annually and are subject to a **rigorous selection process**. Initially, independent experts screen proposals, including due diligence on the potential grantee, to filter out weak, inappropriate or incomplete projects; UNDEF staff then contribute to this initial screening. The 'long list' is then distributed amongst members of the PCG, which may also reach out to colleagues in the field for their views. UNDEF then consults Resident Coordinators regarding specific queries. Once a short-list has been formed, the draft final project selection is presented to the Advisory Board. The Permanent Missions of Member States of countries where projects have been selected are informed of the decision, and asked if they have any issues with the project proposal and given one month to respond. The final list is then sent to the Secretary-General for approval. In total, 50-60 projects are selected for funding each year.
17. Grantees then enter a three-month process of **elaborating and negotiating a comprehensive Project Document**. In some cases, this can take longer, depending on the complexity of the project and capacity of the grantee. During this process, UNDEF colleagues assist grantees with developing a project proposal in line with international standards, including: sufficient problem analysis; a coherent logical framework; SMART baselines, indicators and targets; sufficient monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and a detailed activity-based budget. Grantees are also requested to incorporate 'milestones' i.e. key events during the project implementation which can be verified by UN entities in the field, and consequently aligned with the disbursement of funds.

#### *Project evaluation*

18. **All projects may be subject to a post-project evaluation**, and according to UNDEF around 78% of projects have been evaluated (a total of 365/466 closed projects). In the first round projects, 168 evaluations were contracted directly by grantees, and did not follow a standard procedure. Subsequently, the Board agreed a change of approach to ensure more systematic and independent evaluations. A commercial contract with the firm 'Transtec', based in Brussels, was in place between 2010 and July 2016, under which 197 evaluations were conducted. Since the end of the Transtec contract, UNDEF is developing a revised evaluation strategy which will be presented to the Board. Evaluations are published on-line via UNDEF's website; the decision to make the evaluations public was taken at a 2011 meeting of the UNDEF Advisory Board as part of a commitment to knowledge-sharing, lessons learned, improved project selection and management, and transparency.

#### *Funding*

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<sup>5</sup> See Annex Two: Quantitative Data from Surveys

<sup>6</sup> Global projects, however, have been dramatically diminishing. See Annex Two: Quantitative Data from Surveys

19. The fund is **supported entirely by voluntary (XB) funding** and, in 2015 it reached almost 170 million dollars in contributions from over 40 countries, including many middle and low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Cumulatively speaking, since the founding of UNDEF in 2005, the top ten donors have been: the United States of America; India; Sweden; Germany; Japan; Qatar; Australia; Spain; France, and Italy.

### III. Key findings

#### a. Relevance

20. **The establishment of UNDEF in 2005 was highly appropriate – if somewhat overdue – since its mandate goes to the very heart of why the UN was founded:** a global actor committed to ensuring “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” – as outlined in the preamble of the UN Charter. Underscoring the centrality of the Fund, the values and principles it seeks to further are also outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), which states both that “everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” and that the “will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government”. Since 1948 when the UNDHR was universally adopted, the General Assembly (GA) has repeatedly called upon the UN System to support efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (GA Res 58/15) and, at the World Summit in 2005 (A/RES/60/1), all Member States reaffirmed “that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives”. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, therefore, who actively supported the creation of UNDEF, was adamant that the promotion of democracy is inseparable from the UN’s broader work on security, development and human rights. UNDEF’s creation was not only relevant, it was crucial.
21. The necessity of the establishment of UNDEF stems from the fact that **it fills a significant niche within the UN System.** UNDEF is the only UN actor with the word ‘democracy’ in its name as mentioned by most New York stakeholders and, more importantly, while numerous UN actors support democratization processes – such as DPA, DPKO and UNDP, etc. - UNDEF is the only UN actor working directly in support of civil society in a Member State-oriented and dominant UN System. Many UN actors emphasised their appreciation for this work, given their own difficulties of working directly with CSOs; one New York stakeholder emphasised that “while the Organization places an emphasis on building the capacity of states, democracy is not a state process: unless you have a culture of democracy that is engrained deep down in society, our efforts will fail”. Furthermore, contrary to many international actors, UNDEF uses an expansive definition of civil society, one which includes media, independent entities and fostering leadership, for example; this definition suggests that, rather than supporting Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) – as assumed by many – UNDEF “supports transformations that are necessary for democracy”, as highlighted by one interviewee in New York.
22. Over the years, **UNDEF has become more rather than less relevant as a result of contextual changes, UN-wide policy frameworks as well as efforts on the part of UNDEF to focus its efforts.** First, almost all New York stakeholders interviewed for the purposes of this evaluation reiterated concerns over: the increasing levels of distrust between civil society and Member States; what the Secretary-General has referred to as the “shrinking space for civil society”; harassment of civil society actors; and, a wide variety of laws that restrict freedom of speech, press freedom, and other political and civil rights. On the one hand, these restrictions are tied to the increasing power of civil society actors spurred by technological advances that have enabled them to organise themselves, creating tensions with state actors; on the other hand, many of these restrictions are tied to the anti-terrorism legislation, sometimes used as an ‘excuse’ to crack down on civil society. Regardless, UNDEF efforts to create ‘entry-points’ for civil society in complex settings is

much welcomed and needed. Second, the recently agreed upon SDGs also create increased momentum for UNDEF's work given that all the goals relate to issues worked on by the CSOs under UNDEF's remit, and all point to an increased role for civil society in achieving these goals. Lastly, despite an isolated (one stakeholder) view that UNDEF "is drifting from its traditional mandate", the overwhelming perception is that far from exhibiting 'mission creep' UNDEF's work has become increasingly focused in recent years. This is evidenced by the dramatic move away from funding international actors – prominent during the first two years of the Fund's work - towards working with CSOs directly and on key issues where it can make a catalytic change: an approach that no other UN actor is using.<sup>7</sup> A key example is UNDEF's recent proactive approach in generating, designing, funding and managing a project to empower refugee communities in the frontline states of Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, building their capacity to organize, participate and build knowledge of human rights and international law.

23. Despite its evident relevance, as one of the smallest and newest entities in the UN System (operational for less than a decade), **UNDEF has a low profile – at headquarters and in the field**; the evaluators agree with the words of one interviewee that it is largely "an unknown entity," other than amongst those who already have a direct relationship with the Fund. The majority of Member States interviewed indicate that, prior to joining the Advisory Board, they were unaware of UNDEF; some Member States also note and query the absence of some prominent Western donors – normally supportive of such issues – from its funding list. Many UN staff confirm that, beyond those involved in the PCG, UNDEF is not well-known and, in the instances when it is at least known, it is not well-understood. Part of this is explained by Member State dynamics: "UNDEF is a response to what Member States wanted, not what the UN wanted", one New York stakeholder asserted; had the decision of 'where to place' UNDEF been entirely up to the latter, it would have been on the political side of house, rather than in UNOP, and the evaluators agree UNDEF's work may have been more relevant and impactful on the political side of the house.<sup>8</sup> When seeking to explain UNDEF's low profile some staff point to the lack of the word democracy in the UN Charter, but pay significantly less attention to the numerous UN documents and frameworks that *do* mention democracy. Some staff also mention the key role played by President Bush in UNDEF's establishment, as part of his 'democracy agenda', thereby politicising even further what is perceived as already inherently political work. Furthermore, staff note, several Western Member States do not prioritize democracy support among their contributions to UN entities; and many prefer to conduct civil society funding bilaterally, rather than through a UN entity. The evaluators believe this may be because Member States are not aware of the comparative advantages offered by funding through UNDEF. Some stakeholders, however, believe this low profile is intentional: UNDEF veers away from advocacy, preferring a 'quiet diplomacy' approach; its goal, one stakeholder suggested, is to "make as little noise as possible in order to get on with its work." It would be helpful to conduct an in-house 'cost-benefit' analysis of this strategy: What would UNDEF stand to lose by playing a more proactive, advocacy-oriented role amongst UN entities and Member States? And what would it stand to gain?
24. At the field level, there is **no doubt that UNDEF is relevant to the work of CSOs and there is an overwhelming appreciation of the approach used**. According to 99% of the CSOs that responded to the questionnaire, UNDEF plays a relevant role in advancing

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<sup>7</sup> See Annex Two: Quantitative Data from Surveys

<sup>8</sup> UNDEF notes that the decision of where to place UNDEF was taken by SG Kofi Annan, who chose UNOP as the location. The evaluators note that this point, raised by a New York stakeholder, still stands since the decision was undoubtedly taken in light of Member State dynamics and not irrespective of them i.e. he was not free to choose entirely where to place it.





about grantee commitment to long-lasting results if, in prior instances, activities end abruptly after two years before real improvements can be made. Many of these pressing issues related to UNDEF's theory of change, which will be covered in the next section.

### **Text box one: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF's 'relevance'**

In **Rwanda**, the *Umbrella of organizations of persons with disabilities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for health promotion (UPHLS)* was awarded funds to address the pressing needs of persons with disabilities (PWDs). In Rwanda, PWDs have not only been left out of development policies in the country, but tend to be overrepresented among poor people as a result of their impairments, the lack of a conducive environment to support them, and due to the pervasive stigma attached to PWDs in Rwanda. While the UN Convention on Rights of PWDs was ratified in 2008, little effort was made to implement it. Consequently, PWDs still have limited access to basic services such as health, education, employment, microcredit and rehabilitation, for example. This situation is reinforced by pervasive myths about PWDs, and the fact that their participation in community, social and development programs is limited, and non-existent in many cases. The engagement by UPHLS changed the perceptions of local representatives, local communities and of PWDs themselves; as one stated, "it was like a key that opened in my mind" Through the training, PWDs were able to appreciate their own self-worth and engage in advocacy activities to demand their rights.

In **Colombia**, UNDEF support has enabled the CONTACT Centre to elaborate a project to address issues related to media freedom and access to information at many levels, in line with the needs of the country and neighbours: "Without UNDEF's support, it wouldn't have been possible to produce the mechanism to monitor freedom of press in Colombia and the impact of this index has gone beyond Colombia now that bigger organization around the globe that promote the freedom of press have tools to measure it not only a national level, but also regionally and at local level, indicating where the problems are geographically".

#### **b. Effectiveness**

27. The challenge of analysing the effectiveness of UNDEF is complicated by the **absence of a robust Results Framework and theory of change, which normally form the backbone of an evaluation against which an organization is assessed**: To what extent were the outcomes and outputs realistic and realised? Were the baselines, targets and indicators SMART? Were the activities consistent with those outcomes? UNDEF has developed a specific Results Framework (RF) in 2013 as part of its multi-year contribution agreement with Sweden (Sida); however, it does not allow for an evaluation against outputs and outcomes in terms of SMART targets and indicators, which means it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the fund against this framework, and no other RF has been provided to the evaluators. The RF, for example, tends to confuse outputs, outcomes and indicators: i.e. "Civil society activism increases and improves in quality" could reasonably be considered an outcome, but it is listed under "verifiable indicators". The target for then 'measuring' this indicator<sup>10</sup> is listed as: "90% of grantees completed second milestone within one year". The completion of milestones by grantees, however, tells us nothing about the quality of civil society activism, it simply informs us that a payment milestone has been achieved. Other examples include: "Greater acceptance amongst governments of the benefits of CSO participation in policy formulation"; it is, however, unclear whether the majority of governments will ever fully appreciate CSOs, especially those that perform a strong advocacy role, but they are a necessary part of the democratic process regardless.

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<sup>10</sup> Difficult to measure, since an indicator is normally itself a measure.

Furthermore, the indicator for this output is to be measured by the fact that “no more than 3 projects are withdrawn because of government objections”; this is a problematic form of measurement since UNDEF is unlikely to submit proposals to governments which consistently reject them<sup>11</sup>, and because a ‘non veto’ from a government does not equal understanding of CSO benefits. The RF for 2015 also needs to be strengthened: Outcome One, for example, is listed as “effectiveness and efficiency of UNDEF support to civil society”, which is a measure but not an objective in of itself (i.e. UNDEF’s goal is not to be efficient, but to be efficient *for a purpose*: what is this purpose?). More broadly speaking, the RF fail to give a sense of the whole picture of UNDEF’s work and clear understanding of what it hopes to achieve and by what means.

28. UNDEF also does not possess or work according to a theory of change (TOC), which creates further problems for analysing effectiveness specifically, and for the evaluation as a whole (See Text box four under ‘Impact’). A TOC is a ‘Road Map’ for the work of an organization - or its ‘GPS’ - signalling which path to be taken, and why. The ‘why’ is particularly important as it sheds light on the organizations’ assumptions (and inherently the risks that may threaten or derail those assumptions from holding true), and therefore remains a ‘live’ part of the organization’s working methods – to be constantly revised and adapted in line with changing circumstances, such as policy or contextual changes. A TOC, therefore, helps organizations to remain dynamic: when circumstances change, the organization adapts its strategies to ensure that it remains effective and able to achieve its goals. The evaluators believe that the absence of a TOC is one of the reasons many stakeholders and grantees give such a diverse range of answers when responding to the question: “What is UNDEF?” (see below). UNDEF recognises the value of the TOC and has begun to develop one.
29. Currently, there is a lack of clarity and consensus about what UNDEF does and how: in particular, there is discrepancy among both internal and external stakeholders about whether UNDEF is both ‘CSO-oriented’ and ‘project-oriented’, or only interested in supporting CSO’s in so far as they can support the implementation of projects. If UNDEF is project-oriented, then the ‘so what?’ question must be asked: supporting projects to reach what ends, and how are these ends being measured? The TOC currently being elaborated by UNDEF should respond to these ambiguities. The absence of clarity about UNDEF’s goals is echoed by almost all New York stakeholders, who give diverse opinions about UNDEF’s objectives. According to New York interviewees, UNDEF: “is about strengthening CSO voice around key democratic principles”; “strengthens human rights and rules of law through CSO actors”; “shows demand for civil society support”; “supports small projects quickly to support democracy”; “accompanies the government to strengthen different types of democracy”; “promotes universal values onto people to better their living standards”; “disseminates the idea of democracy”; “helps countries that are unable to provide social services”; and, “UNDEF doesn’t really focus on democracy, but they focus on small things that contribute to democracy ”. **Almost all these stakeholders were extremely supportive of UNDEF and its work, but their diverse views about UNDEF’s goals point to a lack of clarity around its objectives, and/or an inability to communicate them;** this is notable since the stakeholders engaged in New York for this evaluation are indeed those most familiar with UNDEF’s work and actively engaged in it (i.e. Advisory Board representatives and members of the PCG). This lack of clarity is closely tied to the issue of effectiveness, as was raised by one stakeholder in particular: “If

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<sup>11</sup> In UNDEF’s ten years, only ten projects have been ‘vetoed’ by Member States. While this has increased in the last three years (2,3 and 4 vetos in Rounds 7,8 and 9 respectively) we can imagine that there are many more than ten countries who are not receptive to civil society engagements, but that these countries are not consistently approached by UNDEF with project proposals.

UNDEF’s goal is simply to support civil society, it should remain geographically spread; but if UNDEF’s goal is to demonstrate impact on democratic contexts and processes, it needs to be much more focused, and strategic”.

30. Despite these differences of opinion amongst Member States and UN entities, it is possible to state that – if we assume that UNDEF is a ‘project-oriented’ actor providing democracy-related support to mid-range CSOs<sup>12</sup> and some project-oriented capacity-building – **UNDEF has put in place a management system that is highly effective, with some minor areas where it could be improved – especially during project implementation.** Overall, 99.1% of surveyed grantees reported that support provided by UNDEF had been essential for them to achieve their goals (see Figures Three and Four below). As one grantee stated: “UNDEF provides critical financial support to projects that otherwise would not be able to find funds.” More specifically, grantees stated the following about the key parts of the UNDEF management system:

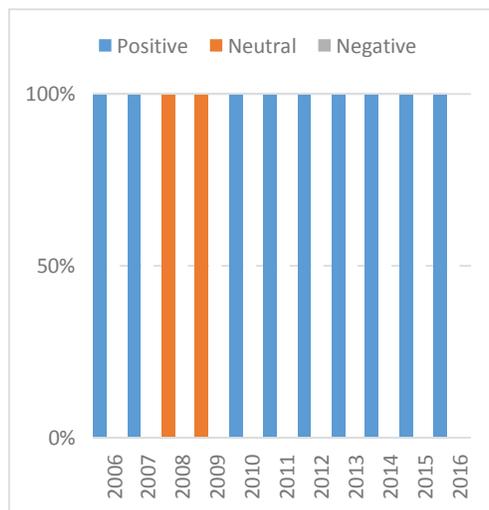


Figure Three: Perceptions of UNDEF/year

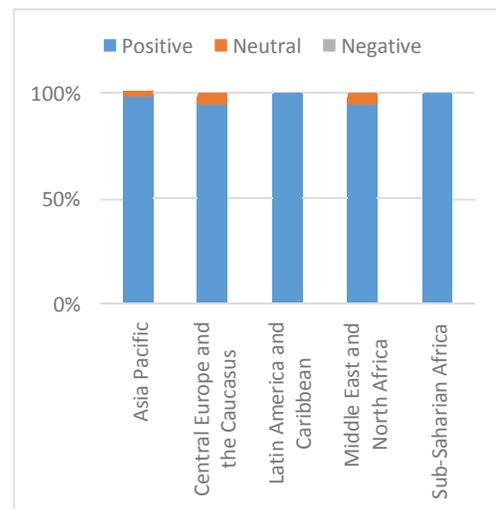


Figure Four: Perceptions of UNDEF support/region

- **Call for proposals:** UNDEF sends out a call for proposals in November of each year: 40% of grantees found the call via internet searches (22% on UNDEF’s website, 28% via the call for proposal); 36% through CSO networks (50% from CSO/NGO platforms, 31% through partners, 19% from email subscription); and, 18% directly through UN institutions (67% from diverse UN agencies, 37% from UNDP). The process is considered relatively effective if somewhat narrow; some grantees suggested that information could be made more consistently available through UNDP Country Offices to help CSOs that do not have online access, and through national media outlets. Given that UNDEF is embedded in the UN System, it is suggested that UNDEF also send the call through government ministries.<sup>13</sup>
- **Application process:** Grantees are requested to submit an on-line proposal through UNDEF’s database system in either English or French. There are mixed views about the application process: 51% believe it is reasonable, 38% believe it is challenging; 5% as very burdensome (and 4% straightforward, 2% very easy).

<sup>12</sup> More information on ‘mid-range CSOs’ will be provided in the next section.

<sup>13</sup> UNDEF may have concerns about widening the network as with limited staff it already struggles to deal with the 3000+ applications it received annually, this will be discussed below.

Grantees appreciate the clear, precise and detailed rules and procedures for application, project development and evaluation, and the simple nature of the concept note. Some grantees believe the process discriminates against weaker CSOs that do not have internet access and recommend that UNDEF accept hard copies. As part of its commitment to supporting CSOs, grantees also believe that UNDEF should offer training courses (on-line) or guidance processes that support CSOs to submit such proposals. Moreover, grantees would like to be able to submit proposals in Spanish. Lastly, many grantees believe the time-lapse between the screening and selection is too long, since “democratization and advocacy projects are highly time-sensitive”. The evaluators strongly support this view.

- **Guidance process:** Once the project selection has been made, UNDEF provides technical support to CSOs to transform their concept note into a Project Document. Grantees appreciate this process: 60% believe it is excellent; 23% good; 15% sufficient, and only 2% believe it could be improved. Although the process is “burdensome and challenging” according to several grantees, they feel it makes the project more effective during implementation. Grantees appreciate: the detailed questions UNDEF asks; language support for non-native English speakers; support clarifying objectives, results and indicators and linking the activities with the budget (the budget many feel is too complex, however); and, clarifying technical terms, etc. During field visits, the overwhelming appreciation for the guidance process was highly evident: “UNDEF made us realised that it’s not about what we want to do, but what we want to *achieve*”; “it was very useful, if you look back, even if the process was quite long, the implementation was easier because of this effort”. Grantees emphasised that these skills have been applied as tools to develop other projects, insisting that “we don’t have this kind of learning processes with other donors”. Stronger CSOs that work with other, weaker CSOs felt this was a model they could replicate to assist them.
- **Implementation process:** There is no pre-determined role for UNDEF during the implementation of projects other than administrative concerns, although grantees can reach out in the case of problems and UNDEF staff try to visit projects when possible (although such visits are not common). While the majority of grantees were positive about UNDEF’s role (43% excellent, 30% good, 21% sufficient, 6% could be improved), they identified many areas for improvement. On the one hand, UNDEF is greatly appreciated for its flexibility and assistance regarding mid-term reports, reporting delays, administrative and financial matters, and some limited *ad hoc* technical assistance; UNDEF’s visits to the field were also highly appreciated and considered unique amongst donors, who “normally only request reports”. Many regret that this interaction – and communication in general - was not more regular and more substantive; grantees perceive that UNDEF is overly concerned with formal processes (mid-term reports, audits, milestones, etc.) and less concerned with the thematic or contextual substance, *and results*. Many underscored a seeming paradox: “I noticed a lot of enthusiasm during the project design process...however, during implementation there was no presence at all.” During implementation, others felt they would benefit from UNDEF’s assistance in facilitating contacts with governments, other national actors, UN entities and other CSOs; regarding the latter, many lament that they were never connected with other UNDEF grantees: “UNDEF had the opportunity to build bridges...it’s a pity this didn’t happen”.
- **Milestone reporting:** UNDEF attends a small minority of project ‘milestones’ when possible, but otherwise this is left up to other actors, predominantly UNDP.

Grantees appreciate the involvement of UNDP in project implementation, as beyond milestone events, some UNDP colleagues have provided additional assistance. However, some grantees felt that UN colleagues were not particularly interested in the work of CSOs which they have not funded themselves. Moreover, 30% of grantees claim that have had no contact with UNDP or other UN agencies during project implementation (including milestone events), 21% rarely, 26% from time to time, 21% often, and only 2% report having had interactions ‘very often’.

- **Evaluation:** 36% of surveyed respondents had been evaluated by Transtec and, out of that, 38% found it ‘extremely useful’, 29% ‘very useful’, 21% ‘useful’, 8% ‘not useful’ and 4% ‘very unhelpful’. Many grantees appreciated: the knowledge/expertise of the evaluators; the identification of linkages between the different stakeholders in the country; and, the identification of areas where the grantees could improve their work. However, the majority found that the evaluation would be more useful if it was conducted as a mid-term, rather than final, evaluation. Some grantees also felt UNDEF should play a more active role to ensure the impartiality and expertise of the evaluators, through a formal complaint mechanism and the provision of feedback from UNDEF to the grantee after the evaluation by means of ‘follow up’. During the field phase, the evaluators found that – amongst those entities that had been evaluated – four out of seven grantees had not been given an opportunity to review the report before it went public, in some cases causing grave concern for the CSO due to comments made. The evaluators believe that an evaluation without feedback or follow-up is only useful for accountability purposes, not for learning. UNDEF maintains that it has a policy to ensure that all grantees are given the opportunity to review the evaluations, and indicate that the ‘closure checklist’ from their records suggests that only one grantees report was mistakenly made public prior to review. This discrepancy should be looked into further, but is outside the scope of the current evaluation.
31. While diverse instruments – qualitative and quantitative have been used – **it is difficult to make conclusions about the quality and performance of projects funded by UNDEF on the basis of the desk studies.** The evaluators conducted a desk review of 50 projects, using reports written by grantees and Transtec evaluations, but the former suffers from problems of bias, and the latter was not always available and/or were normally conducted directly after the project concluded, leaving no possibility to assess the sustainability of the results - a vital component of being able to understand quality and performance. Furthermore, once projects are closed, UNDEF does not conduct any follow-up activities – for example two, five or ten years later – which would enable a fuller appreciation of impact, both on the grantee and on the context: following project closure, UNDEF-grantee relationships are effectively severed. Similarly, questionnaire responses also suffer from bias and it is not possible to measure results and impact via on-line questionnaire alone. Taking these constraints into account, the desk review revealed that in terms of design, coherence and relevance, as well as implementation and sustainability projects score an average of 67.05 out of 100, with a maximum score of 88.70 and a minimum score of 33.60 – an average score which is considered very positive by the evaluators. The fact that projects scored lower in terms of sustainability is, as previously stated, a reflection of the available material on the data-base.

Indicator table results	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Max. Score
Design, coherence and relevance	26.52	13.10	37.05	40
Implementation	26.26	10.81	36.80	40

Sustainability	14.27	3.00	20.00	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67.05</b>	<b>33.60</b>	<b>88.70</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure Five: Quantitative results of the desk-based analysis of 50 projects

32. The field visits revealed a resoundingly positive picture. While at 20 case studies, the field visits are not representative, the **overwhelmingly impression was that UNDEF has supported impressive CSOs implementing targeted projects in a professional manner, with meaningful results and – in some cases – interesting outcomes**, albeit on a small scale and at risk of not being sustainable given the two-year timeframe. In Rwanda, for example, a project for people with disabilities (PWDs) had a profound impact on their lives (see Case Study One in the Case Study Supplement); PWDs went from believing themselves to be “non-citizens”, due to the social stigma attached to living with disabilities, to being active and appreciated members of society. Another project in Rwanda on the media enabled local communities to actively influence policies that affect their lives, and shifted a predominantly urban media to covering important issues in rural areas (see Case Study Two). In Liberia, there is significant, albeit anecdotal evidence that a country-wide project on civic awareness contributed significantly to a higher election turn-out – especially amongst rural communities and women – and a significant reduction of violence (See Case Study Three). A project in Lebanon successfully brought together youth from different religious and ethnic sects, helping them to overcome prejudices instilled in them by the media and their own communities and parents; jointly the youth developed an advocacy campaign on the issue of child soldiers, and were able to present their views to Government representatives (See Case Study Five). In Colombia, the grantees ‘Index for Freedom of Information’, has now been validated by the Government as *the* formal index to measure the freedom of expression at national and local levels (see Case Study 19 and 20). And, in Sri Lanka, thanks to the grantees project, women’s political participation at the local level went up from 4% to 25% (see Case Study 10). While these case studies only covered ten countries and 20 projects, the evaluators believe that many of these impressive results are indeed replicated across other countries and throughout UNDEF’s ten years of existence. More information will be provided in this regard in the section on ‘Impact’.

#### Text box two: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF’s ‘effectiveness’

In **Guatemala**, thanks to UNDEF, the grantee ‘COMADEP’ learned how to build a baseline during the guidance process and today is still using this tool and the formats provided by UNDEF to design projects. The grantee also found the evaluation to be highly beneficial due to the fact that “it was a valuable learning mechanism and a systematization of the whole process we had been through. This last step [of UNDEF’s engagement] strengthened our efforts because it covered the planning cycle, the implementation and the evaluation”. An external view on this project cycle was something they deeply appreciated: “We could definitely trust this external view,” they said. Recently, CONGCOOP – another CSO in-country - asked COMADEP to implement a course on the guidance process learned from UNDEF; consequently, the formats used and the guidance process will somehow being passed to other structures of the CONGCOOP’s network.

In **Rwanda**, Pax Press was awarded a grant for a project entitled, ‘Dialogue entre la Société civile et les autorités locales sur les politiques publiques au Rwanda’. The project responded to a report written in 2010 by *L’Institut de Recherche pour la Démocratie et la Paix Durable (IRDPA)* which found that 74% of Rwandans have never participated in the elaboration of policies that affect their lives, and that almost 90% have never or only very rarely been consulted by authorities – demonstrating the way in which the link between state and society in

Rwanda is particularly weak. For communities involved in the project, community debates created vital spaces for dialogue and contributed to creating a greater “culture of dialogue”. Whereas authorities were reluctant at first to engage in community debates facilitated by journalists, once they had engaged in one they fully appreciated the value of the opportunity to exchange views and to be able to hear the views and ideas of rural communities; this reluctance was overcome by the non-confrontational, participatory approach fostered by journalists as a result of the Pax Press training. The training was effective at building more trusting relationships between local government officials and communities, while also building a link between urban and rural populations.

33. UNDEF’s effectiveness could be significantly improved by using the vast knowledge accrued from the field and its unique, ‘niche’ position within the UN system. The findings of this evaluation suggest that, while UNDEF uses the UN System to a certain extent as will be discussed in the next section, it is in the position to give more *back* to the UN System than it does currently. Given its vast network of 150 CSOs-‘ears-on the ground’ at any given time, as well as the accumulated network of 600+ motivated former grantees, **UNDEF has one of the most effective conflict prevention and human rights early warning systems at its fingertips; it also has the ability to present a global picture of the state of civil society, and the evolving nature of restrictions on civil society to the UN System - which no other entity in the UN System is able to do.** This sentiment is echoed partially by the 2010 OIOS Audit, which recommended UNDEF to strengthen “its strategic communication plan by preparing a separate Secretary-General’s report to the General Assembly on UNDEF activities”; UNDEF responded to this recommendation, but since the focus (as per the recommendation) is on *activities* rather than *objectives* and *results*, the report does not convey information on the state of democracy and civil society. Beyond the GA, the information UNDEF is able to garner from the field is also of deep relevance to the Security Council, where it could be regularly providing inputs similar to DPA’s former ‘Horizon Scanning Briefings’. By means of example of UNDEF’s potential: one of the evaluators brought potential human rights violations to the attention of UNDEF when women beneficiaries in Liberia indicated they had received death threats; through the coordinated work of two UNDEF grantees on the ground, the swift action of UNDEF’s Executive Head and the evaluator serving as intermediary, UNMIL became involved and the Government decided to position a police unit in the village. This example indicates what UNDEF is able to achieve when it connects community-level field knowledge with other UN actors. UNDEF, however, currently lacks the staff capacity, the knowledge management system and mechanisms through which CSO concerns can be brought to its attention to be able to consistently play this type of role. However, these issues point to ways in which both the Advisory Board and the PCG could be used in a significantly more strategic manner, issues to be discussed shortly under ‘Efficiency’.

### ***Efficiency***

34. UNDEF’s process for selecting projects runs like a “well-oiled machine”, in the words of one New York stakeholder and supported by similar phrases from many more. Indeed, **New York stakeholders consistently state their appreciation of UNDEF’s efficiency and “extremely rigorous and well-managed” project selection process.** The projects are subject to multiple rounds of review: a first phase where expert consultants – with subject area and/or thematic expertise – ensure that the most promising projects go through to the next round, whereas the weakest ones are excluded. In a second phase, UNDEF reviews the work of the consultants in order to arrive at a ‘long short-list’. In a third phase, this list is sent to the PCG and Resident Coordinators (RCs) to provide comments and to respond to

three key questions: a) Do you have any concerns about the applicant/CSO?; b) To your knowledge, is this already a ‘crowded field’/are the issues outlined in the project already being sufficiently addressed by other others?; and, c) Is this project in line with the mandate of the respective UN entity? In a fourth phase, the Advisory Board provides comments on the short-list, and can veto projects if necessary, although this is rare occurrence. The selected projects are then sent to the Permanent Missions of the Member States where projects have been selected. If there are no objections, the recommendations are sent to Secretary-General for approval. This combination of insider-outsider expert consultation on the one hand, combined with technical and senior political inputs on the other, ensures a high degree of inclusiveness and a significant level of ‘vetting’. The ability to use the PCG, as well as relationships with a large network of RCs spread throughout the world also supports the ‘One-UN’ approach and displays levels of collaboration not consistently evident in other parts of the UN System. During this intensive process, UNDEF is also commended for its high-level of responsiveness.

35. One relatively unknown and quite unique aspect of UNDEF’s work during this process, is its **extensive ‘quiet diplomacy’ engagements with Member States who may be hesitant or resistant to support civil society in general, or specific projects in particular**. It is UNDEF’s Executive Head who plays a significant – and relatively time-intensive – role of engaging with Member States who have queries about UNDEF, its approach, specific projects and grantees. UNDEF is able to capitalise upon its position in New York to engage in dialogue with Member States. Depending on in-country dynamics at the time, UNDEF may avoid some countries altogether on the basis that *all* projects will be rejected. However, with countries that may be resistant, UNDEF tries to create ‘entry-points’, by providing support to CSOs in what UNDEF calls its ‘thin wedge approach’: it presents relatively technical projects, or projects focused on niche/seemingly non-political issues. With governments that are resistant, UNDEF presents a wide array of projects to the Member State in question, thereby giving the government a degree of choice. The fact that UNDEF is required to seek government approval is considered “interesting but unfair” by many CSOs and a “weakness we have to deal with” by some Advisory Board members; many others, however, feel that a project without a degree of Government buy-in is unlikely to succeed, since state-society relations is central to many (although certainly not all) UNDEF projects.<sup>14</sup> The ‘quiet diplomacy’ approach to project selection – and government involvement in this process, therefore - can be considered a highly efficient use of UNDEF’s time, resources and position within the UN System, and one which should be expanded,<sup>15</sup> and complemented by other approaches.
36. Despite these largely positive views of the selection process and putting the issue of *international* NGOs to one side, **the criteria for selecting projects tends to favour stronger local CSOs over and above smaller or ‘weaker’ ones who may have good ideas**, leading the evaluators to conclude that UNDEF predominantly supports ‘mid-level CSOs’. UNDEF is in a unique position to provide support to small CSOs that other donors may not be willing to fund<sup>16</sup>; it is also in a position to try out innovative approaches to fostering democracy – not least given the rigorous audit processes it has put in place that helps avoid instances of corruption and money laundering. However, the selection process tends to exclude the weakest CSOs and under-values innovation compared to more

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<sup>14</sup> Cumulatively speaking, 86% of projects proposals submitted for consideration by CSOs have focused on strengthening civil society capacity for engagement with Government.

<sup>15</sup> It may be possible to expand this mechanism through other means; please see Section on ‘Efficiency’.

<sup>16</sup> UNDEF indicates that the assessors are explicitly instructed to “not be overly influenced by the often greater technical and stylistic experience of international NGOs in writing project proposals”; the evaluators here, however, are discussing the differences in capacities of local CSOs, not international NGOs.

standard selection criteria. During the initial selection process the external consultants are requested to score projects according to 10 criteria, including: the extent to which the project promotes the objectives of UNDEF; is sustainable; draws upon the UN comparative advantage: impactful; inclusiveness; gender sensitive; has prospects for successful implementation; technically sound in conception and presentation; and, the extent to which the project represents good value for money, and whether the applicant has a strong track record. These criteria are given equal weighting, which favours stronger CSOs over and above strong ideas: for example, a project that has good prospects for successful, impactful and inclusive implementation is significantly more important than whether or not the organization has a strong track record, and whether the proposal is well-presented (not least given the fact that many CSOs lack proposal writing experience and may be writing in a language which is not their own). Innovation i.e. the extent to which this project elaborates an approach that is not standard democracy promotion, is also missing from the list of criteria. A differently weighted system, prioritising those criteria which help weaker CSOs with great ideas get through the system, would assist. The tendency to favour mid-level CSOs over smaller ones is reflected in the process for developing the programme document, when many whose projects have been selected are forced to drop out as the process is simply too rigorous and time-consuming for them at their stage of development. The absence of a mechanism for helping weaker CSOs get through the first round of selection, and for helping CSOs beyond the technical assistance previously outlined, is also missing *if* UNDEF believes its goal is to strengthen civil society.

### **Text box three: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF's 'efficiency'**

In **Liberia**, Volunteers to Support International Efforts in Developing Africa (VOSIEDA) was awarded a grant to promote civic awareness in post-war Liberia with a view to create broader and more meaningful participation in the October 2011 national elections. The project was motivated by a study conducted by VOSIEDA that found that over 65% of Liberians have previously voted out of fear, apathy and lack of knowledge – and often according to tribal affiliations - due in part to high levels of illiteracy, poverty and inadequate access to civic education and empowerment. VOSEIDA's approach to addressing this issue was extremely efficient; they developed 50 democratic and human rights networks of grassroots civil society organizations in rural Liberia to: implement 100 civic and voters education programmes; train and deploy 300 non-partisan grassroots election monitors to observe the 2011 electoral processes and handle complaints; build the capacity of aspiring rural women and youth to stand for local and national elections; and, to create a sustainable national alliance to promote capacity in organizational management, fundraising, leadership and other issues. Without question, the elections had a higher voter turn-out, with the highest number of women presenting themselves for election ever recorded in Liberia; and, the elections passed without any significant incidence of violence. The organisations and individuals engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation attribute these outcomes to the work of VOSIEDA; the way in which VOSEIDA worked was an extremely efficient use of its scarce resources.

However, one grantee in **Colombia** noted that UNDEF's efficiency does not spread throughout the project cycle. They believe UNDEF support focuses on key moments in an *ad hoc* manner, and overly preoccupied with the formal aspects of the process (reports, milestones, evaluations), but pays less attention to the achievement of results and outcomes. "It is an intermittent relationship", they said, "with lots of concentration whenever there are issues that need to be solved but then there is no contact. It is a very respectful relationship, although there is an excess of care in the formal things and a bit unconcerned towards results." They also felt that it would be interesting and helpful for UNDEF and UNDEF grantees to strengthen

relationships among CSOs: “UNDEF has the opportunity of constructing bridges and it is a thematic partner and we should have a more profound dialogue regarding democracy”.

37. **UNDEF’s expenditures are cost-efficient, but the organization is overstretched, which has impacts on its ability to be effective.** Costs related to projects began at an extremely high \$34 million a year, dropping to \$20 million in 2007, 16 million in 2006 and, since then, the average project costs per year have been around 10 million dollars – not including costs related to M&E. Administrative expenses have fluctuated marginally over the past ten years, but on average by only around \$200,000 a year, excluding the three initial years when the Fund was still ‘ramping up’ activities. UNDEF reserves 10% of project funding for M&E, which equals around \$1 million per year. If we sum the cumulative administrative costs and M&E-related costs, UNDEF’s total operational costs equals 16.2% of the total expenditure. In 2015, administrative costs rose to 14.55% and M&E to 7.7%<sup>17</sup> - an extremely low figure for any organization, especially a UN entity, which have typically high overheads (UNDEF pays around \$238,000/year on office space rental, for example, and programme support costs of 5% - which cost \$83,810 in 2015 – some entities pay up to 35%). Operational costs are so low because UNDEF has only seven staff persons: one Executive Head, two senior programme officers (P-5), two programme officers (one P-4 and one P-3) and two programme assistants (G-S). Given that the Fund is managing 150 to 200 projects per year (those being analysed, receiving guidance, undergoing implementation, entering closure, etc.), this means that each programme officer (senior and non-senior) is dealing with +/- 50 projects each – and each project has a diverse range of needs. There is very little scope for the Fund to be *more* efficient with regards to the staff; far from it, the current staffing table limits UNDEF, since it is consistently overstretched. With this limited staff, however, the Fund is able to do an enormous amount, underscored by the shock of almost all grantees when informed that UNDEF has only seven staff members.
38. Efficiency and fairness could be improved by changing some of the levels of staff: it makes little sense to have two P5 staffers working under a D1, especially as one of the P5 staffers is conducting similar work to those on more junior positions. **With regards to M&E, the costs are also not particularly significant; however, the return on these costs is not nearly as high as it could be,** since the findings of the evaluations do not change the course of projects as they occur at the end of the process, not mid-way, and because the evaluations do not cover the impact that UNDEF support had on the project/grantee - missing opportunities for UNDEF also to be learning and adapting<sup>18</sup>. UNDEF maintains that it uses the findings of the evaluations to influence project selection, and points to its collection of lessons learnt to demonstrate this; the findings in the lessons learnt document, however – since they are based on evaluations conducted by Transtec which have no follow-up, tend to focus on products and outputs, and miss the richness of lessons learnt captured by engaging the grantees in a process of joint learning, and of understanding what impact the project had on them and the stakeholders in their own communities – tend to be relatively high-level and generic.
39. **The governance structure for UNDEF is both robust and representative; however, the majority of stakeholders feel it is under-utilised.** UNDEF’s Advisory Board is composed of 18 members, including the seven biggest donors from the previous three years, and six other Member States from different regions, chosen for their commitment to democracy

<sup>17</sup> M&E costs are included as a percentage of the projects funding equivalent to 10% of the value of the project, so they are calculated as a part of the UNDEF investment in CSOs.

<sup>18</sup> Typically evaluations include findings and recommendations for the donor (in this case UNDEF) and the grantee in question. Transtec evaluations typically only cover elements related to the grantee.

and in the interest of diversity; the Fund also includes three members serving in an individual capacity and two representatives of CSOs. The seven biggest donors have not evolved considerably in the last ten years; it has featured eleven Member States; including US, India, Japan, Qatar, Australia, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden and, more recently, Chile and Poland; however, the other Member States have evolved each year, with diverse and impressive representation. The Advisory Board is supported by the technical PCG (as outlined in Section II), and all representatives participate actively and appreciate UNDEF's work.

40. However, **Advisory Board members believe the format of the meetings – and their engagements in the Fund more broadly - could be more interactive, dynamics and effective**; some Board Members, for example, questioned: “How helpful can these meetings really be to UNDEF?”, and several others were keen to understand what other countries are thinking about democracy, and how they are dealing with challenges related to democracy. UNDEF maintains that the minutes of the Advisory Board meeting do demonstrate substantive discussions, pointing to a difference of opinion between UNDEF and its Advisory Board on what can be considered ‘substantive’; the evaluators note that the minutes reflect a discussion of activities, but do not create space for discussions about democracy, civil society or the challenges faced by either. According to many New York stakeholders, there is scope for the Advisory Board to serve a wide range of roles, including: as a mechanism for assisting the Executive Head more often to deal with ‘more difficult’ Member States who may oppose projects through their bilateral relationships – a support system which is used occasionally already, but could be expanded; as a forum to generate substantive discussions on thematic facets of democracy - which would undoubtedly prove to be a rich exchange of views given the diversity of Members; for fostering dialogue with Member States who appear to be ‘cracking down’ on civil society (if UNDEF was more consistently receiving such information from the field); and, as an avenue for presenting ‘sun-setting projects’ for bilateral funding, thereby helping grantees to fund successful projects. UNDEF maintains that it has often used Board members as ‘Ambassadors’ to seek additional donors; the evaluators – in line with the views expressed by members of the Advisory Board - believe that UNDEF could be more actively using the Advisory Board in this manner, and to serve more broadly as ‘promoters’ of the work of the Fund, providing that UNDEF is able to increase their understanding of UNDEF's strategic vision and impact.
41. Positive reflections on UNDEF's high levels of efficiency are reflected by stakeholders in the field. **Grantees surveyed as part of this evaluation rate the support provided by UNDEF as excellent (61%) or good (28%)** (see Figure Six below) and are particularly appreciative of UNDEF's timeliness in responding to messages – although those who were unhappy with UNDEF stated timeliness in terms of response to emails as the key reason (56% rated UNDEF's responsiveness as excellent, 31% as good, 9% as sufficient, 4% as requiring improvement and 0.4% as bad). Over the past ten years, however, the satisfaction rate with UNDEF staff is highly variable (See Figure Seven below: 2006 is an outlier since there was only one respondent from this round). Furthermore, analysis shows that the number of respondents rating UNDEF as excellent was higher in the Middle East (80%, compared to 60% in Sub-Saharan African, 52% in Latin America and the Caribbean; 59% in Central Europe and the Caucasus; and 62% Asia-Pacific). Interestingly, the ‘excellent’ rating of responsiveness decreases in proportion with increasing funding, whereby the percentage of those receiving less than \$100,000 who rate UNDEF's responsiveness as excellent is 65%, whereas amongst those receiving between \$300,000-\$400,000 that figure decreases to 33%. Variability with regards to responses across regions may be due to the

relative experience of staff (given that projects are distributed on a regional basis and staff do not tend to have regional expertise), and suggests that staff would benefit from sharing their experiences of mentoring/working with grantees. Variability with regards to levels of appreciation and funding may also be explained by the fact that organizations with a longer track record may be offered larger grants, whereas smaller organisations with less experience may receive slightly less, and more attention. Ascertaining this would require more research.



Figure Six: Perceptions of UNDEF support/year



Figure Seven: Perceptions of UNDEF responsiveness/year

42. At a more strategic level it is difficult to speak about the efficiency of UNDEF, given the challenges around fully understanding the impact of UNDEF as an organization. **From Round 1 through Round 9 and not including operational costs, UNDEF has spent \$145,250,416 on projects in the field, but to what effect?**

### Impact

43. As already outlined, measuring impact is highly problematic since impact assessments are technical, rigorous assessments that go well beyond the scope of what is possible in this evaluation. The TORs were therefore re-interpreted in the context of the inception report - approved by UNDEF (see Annex) - to demonstrate what would be feasible in line with the United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG) guidelines given the: absence of a results framework; absence of a TOC; absence of baselines; limited timeframe; limited budget; and, the complexity of dealing with multiple contexts, multiple themes and complex environments (See Text box four below); therefore, while the TOR requests for an analysis of “the overall impact of UNDEF projects in addressing gender and targeting marginalized groups” this is not possible here. **Measuring impact is, furthermore, affected by the lack of common understanding concerning UNDEF’s objective:** if UNDEF’s goal is to strengthen CSOs, it should be measuring how many ‘weaker’ CSOs it has ‘strengthened’ and how; if UNDEF’s goal is to strengthen CSOs to conduct projects, then it should be consistently collecting the baseline and indicator data of all grantees and measuring whether projects have reached their goals; if, however, UNDEF’s goal is to improve the state of democracy and civil society, it needs to have a much more targeted approach that

measures whether the state of democracy and civil society have in fact improved (measured by restrictions and involvement of CSOs in state-related processes, for example) before and after the project. In the absence of this clarification, a more general understanding of 'impact' has been used i.e. indicating *effect* without being overly prescriptive about the type of effect anticipated.

#### **Text box four: United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Guidelines on impact assessments/evaluations and how this relates to the UNDEF evaluation**

“There is a growing consensus that a Theory of Change (TOC) approach provides a sound basis for impact evaluations adopting qualitative or quantitative approaches, or a mix of the two<sup>19</sup>.” UN literature defines the ToC as the fundamental basis over which an impact evaluation can be implemented. Without it, it is not possible to address the validity of the Fund as a whole because of a lack of clarity concerning its intentions to establish a transition from theory to practice, and to determine if the correct strategy to meet identified goals was established. The lack of a clear causality chain is counter-productive to the Fund in general, since it creates confusion around its ‘reasons for being.

The lack of information on projects’ outcomes and results implies that a quantitative impact evaluation cannot be accomplished, since it would require a significantly more complex evaluation process, which cannot be achieved with the time and resources available. As outlined by the UNEG: “Many types of intervention are not appropriate for complex quantitative approaches, such as experimental or quasi-experimental methods. These would include: “programs with an extensive range and scope that have activities that cut across sectors, themes, and geographic areas. These can be complicated — multiple agencies, multiple simultaneous causes for the outcomes and causal mechanisms differing across contexts and complex (recursive, with feedback loops, and with emergent outcomes)”.

Much of the work of UN bodies is in complicated and/or complex situations, an aspect that needs to be built into the design of impact evaluation. Sometimes, it may be possible to break down such interventions into simpler components, which lend themselves to quantitative analysis. However, for a great many UN interventions, quantitative methods will answer only part of the questions related to impact. This will place a premium on evaluation designs, which are centred on qualitative methods.<sup>20</sup> For the World Bank, furthermore, an impact evaluation requires the use of different competencies<sup>21</sup>, the existence of a baseline and data on outcomes and results from monitoring, a reference group (which were not part of the projects) and an investment of an average of 968,750 dollars to implement it in one country<sup>22</sup>.

In the absence of a results framework, theory of change, baseline data, investments of around one million dollars per case study, vast amount of time, and a control group, the evaluators (as outlined in the inception report) opted for a retrospective analysis of impact based on the perceptions of stakeholders obtained through the use of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. This was the best combination of tools available to the evaluators given the constraints outlined.

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<sup>19</sup> Impact Evaluation in UN Agency Evaluation Systems: Guidance on Selection, Planning and Management. UNEG. [www.uneval.org/document/download/1880](http://www.uneval.org/document/download/1880)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Budget items include staff fees for at least one principal investigator/ researcher, a research assistant, a field coordinator, a sampling expert, survey enumerators, and project staff, who may provide support throughout the evaluation. Impact Evaluation in Practice. The world Bank. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTHDOFFICE/Resources/5485726-1295455628620/Impact\\_Evaluation\\_in\\_Practice.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTHDOFFICE/Resources/5485726-1295455628620/Impact_Evaluation_in_Practice.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Impact Evaluation in Practice. The world Bank. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTHDOFFICE/Resources/5485726-1295455628620/Impact\\_Evaluation\\_in\\_Practice.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTHDOFFICE/Resources/5485726-1295455628620/Impact_Evaluation_in_Practice.pdf)

44. **In terms of the impact of UNDEF, there are mixed results.** Over the course of its ten year’s life span, UNDEF has become more streamlined, with a more efficient data-base system; it has become better known amongst CSOs; it is more targeted in its selection process; and, more ‘savvy’ in the way it engages with Member States who may be reluctant to accept project proposals. From Round 1-9, the number of applications received doubled from 1303 in Round 1 to 2664 in Round 9, but the number of projects approved and receiving funding, however has been steadily decreasing: from 125 in Round 1, to 69 in Round 3, and 49, 53, and 52 in Round 7, 8 and 9 respectively (See Figure Eight below). The Fund lacks the financial resources to support more projects; demand for repeat projects, however is clear, and UNDEF has also been called upon to conduct emergency projects (in Turkey for Syrian refugees, for example). The need is clearly greater than UNDEF’s capacity to respond, and will only become greater should UNDEF decide to implement a more concerted communications strategy.<sup>23</sup> The ability to attract more funds in order to meet this need, however, is dependent on UNDEF’s ability to demonstrate impact.<sup>24</sup> Given that the majority of the information on UNDEF’s database relates to outputs (and some limited outcomes if visible at closure), and given that evaluations do not cover all projects, occur too soon to be able to fully grasp outcomes and tend to be overly ‘audit-focused’ rather than learning-oriented in nature<sup>25</sup>, it is possible to confirm that *UNDEF is insufficiently aware of its impact in the field.*

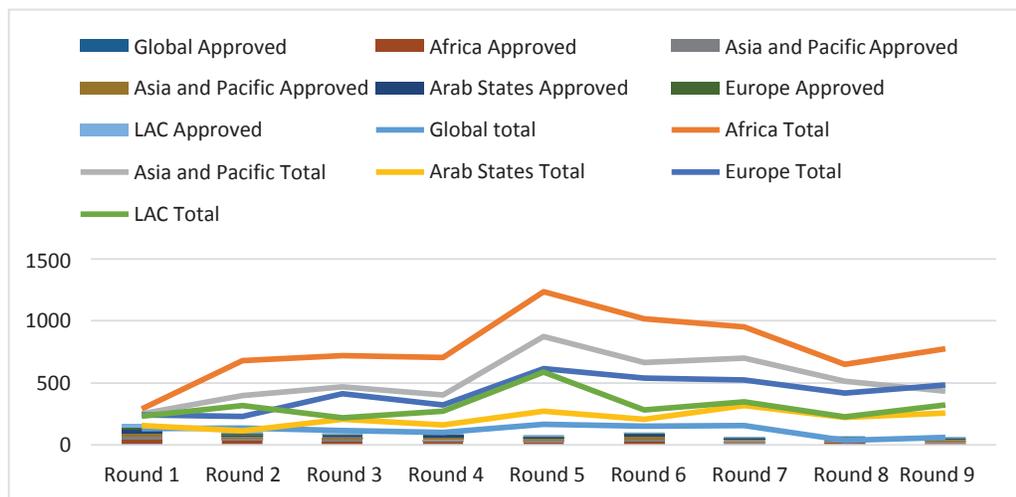


Figure Eight: Evolution of no. applicants received/no. projects accepted/round and region.

45. Research conducted during this evaluation, however, indicate that UNDEF has had an ‘impact’ in the field. According to the questionnaire surveys – which can be considered statistically representative – **98% of grantees believe that UNDEF’s support had a positive effect on their projects (only 2% gave a neutral response and no one responded negatively). Furthermore, 94% of respondents believe their project contributed to democratisation in their country, 5% were unsure and only 1% disagreed; these results display little variability across the years<sup>26</sup> and only marginal variability across regions.<sup>27</sup> While there is evidently some bias - since grantees are likely to inflate their own achievements - this is somewhat reduced by the fact that the**

<sup>23</sup> These issues will be addressed in greater detail under ‘Sustainability’.

<sup>24</sup> In December 2016, the evaluators were informed by UNDEF that: “there are ongoing efforts to analyze lessons learned – supported by a grant from the UK FCO – to develop a web-based mechanism that will provide an interactive tool to lessons learned from evaluations that will be integrated into the project cycle and regularly updated”.

<sup>25</sup> As above.

<sup>26</sup> With the exception of 2008, when 14% of respondents were neutral in their evaluation of UNDEF support.

<sup>27</sup> Survey respondents in Central Europe (6%) and in the Middle East (7%) were neutral about the impacts of UNDEF support.

questionnaires were conducted anonymously. Even taking the bias into account, survey respondents report a wide array of highly tangible outcomes as a result of their projects. In Central Asia, for example, following the UNDEF project, one CSO reports being asked to become a member of the Public Council, under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan; similarly, in Ukraine, the project enabled the grantee to play a pivotal role in developing reforms on human rights and the environment, going onto even help draft laws. The two examples are by no means the only ones, but demonstrate the type of impacts UNDEF has had at the field level (more examples of impact are outline in Text box Five below).

46. The field visits conducted by the evaluators allowed for a much deeper understanding of project outcomes – at least for those projects included in this evaluation. Three levels of impact can be ascertained: the impact of UNDEF’s support on the grantee; the impact on beneficiaries; and, the impact on the broader context (local, national or regional). In terms of the impact on CSOs, **the majority of grantees engaged with suggest this impact has been extremely positive.** Grantees felt empowered by UNDEF’s technical approach of strengthening the project without changing its substance. More importantly, the guidance process transferred vital technical skills to the grantees: as one CSO in Rwanda stated: “the RBM approach was new to us...and helped us understand the linkages between activities and objectives.” Almost all grantees have used these skills to develop other projects, often successfully being awarded grants by other donors subsequently. UNDEF support was also seen as a ‘stamp of approval’ for CSOs, enhancing the legitimacy of the organization in the eyes of the beneficiaries. UNDEF support means “the organization is credible, able to manage funds and implement projects effectively – why else would the organization be given funds from the UN?”, stated one grantee. In politically-sensitive contexts, support from the UN over and above bilateral entities is a huge advantage: compared to bilateral donors and according to grantees, the UN is “perceived as being less political” or “less tainted”, which greatly facilitates work with beneficiaries who are suspicious of external ‘interference’. For some organizations, UNDEF support has enabled them to work at a ‘higher level’: for certain CSOs this meant shifting from working only at the community level, to gaining access to state structures and processes; for others, this meant shifting from largely national work to regional-level work – it was the “UN boost” said one grantee. Grantees that benefited less from UNDEF support include international NGOs and/or more experienced NGOs – further supporting the notion that UNDEF’s comparative advantage is its support to weaker, lesser-known entities.
47. The field visits confirmed that, beyond the impacts on grantees, **the impact of UNDEF-funded projects on beneficiaries has been profound.** In Lebanon, youth from different ethnic groups were brought together, many meeting someone from a different sect or from a different part of the country for the first time, going onto make good friends with people who could only be ‘enemies’ in their eyes just months before – a profound and unforgettable experience for all involved; many of the youth now want to go onto work in the realm of peacebuilding. A regional project in Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan that aimed to empower women took a targeted approach, focused on educating and sensitizing men; one respondent in Jordan said: “prior to the project, women were insignificant to me, they were not an active part of society. We have a domesticated view of women – she is a mother, a maid, etc., but no more. However, with time, we came to realise that women have the right to speak, and work, and to become an active part of society.” Furthermore, one respondent in Colombia where the index on freedom of expression was implemented said: “It has had a great impact, for sure. You can see it for example in how victims didn’t feel the free or have the confidence to express what they felt before the project. Today this is different

because they no longer feel marginalized and have the space to speak out”. In Guatemala, in a project designed to officially recognize indigenous communities and facilitate the integration of formal and informal justice systems, one beneficiary stated: The project “had an impact when the State itself started recognizing the indigenous people as part of the society. They are going to have another opportunity to claim their particular rights as indigenous groups. Therefore, they exist for the State”. Lastly, a young boy from Guatemala who benefitted from the youth-empowerment project, stated: “The truth is that I run out of words when I try to explain...[the project] had a huge impact on me, it opened many doors, gave me lots of opportunities and helped me to develop in a better way, especially within the society.” There is simply not enough space here to provide insights on the multiple – and often moving – ways in which the projects changed and often transformed the lives of beneficiaries. The evaluators again strongly encourage all stakeholders to closely read the Case Study Supplement to better grasp the deep impact these projects had on the lives and livelihoods of marginalized populations in the context of projects that, without UNDEF support, may never have been implemented.

48. Evidently, the impact of projects that aim to influence democracy should go well beyond the direct beneficiaries. As already mentioned several times, it was beyond the scope of this evaluation to be able to conduct impact evaluations (See Text box Four above). However, **anecdotal evidence concerning the perceptions of impact at a broader level suggest impressive results.** In Sri Lanka, for example, the country’s own ‘facebook revolution’, which emerged as an outcome of a UNDEF’s project, was fundamental to increasing critical thinking in the country, and improving youth participation in politics. During the implementation of the project, the majority of Human Right’s defenders had left the country as the Government was controlling CSOs. However, as a contribution of the project, relations between Government and CSOs are now relatively constructive. In Georgia, the approval of the law for the implementation of social policies focused on PWDs will create new opportunities for this sector of the population, which has been consistently marginalised in the past. This impressive level of results was not seen in all the projects but neither should this be expected in a fund supporting over 50 projects a year; the evaluators estimated that 80% of those projects visited were highly effective and have the potential to produce meaningful results.
49. **Putting aside individual project flaws and weaknesses - which are too ‘micro’ and project-specific to cover here<sup>28</sup> - impact at the field level could be significantly enhanced by UNDEF actions.** First, UNDEF could more consistently connect CSOs with one another in-country; many grantees were unaware that other CSOs had been funded by UNDEF. In many instances, had the CSOs been connected the ability of both to achieve their mandates would have been dramatically improved. Second, UNDEF lacks the capacity to connect CSOs working on similar themes in different countries and different regions; the evaluators identified multiple occasions where the insights of one grantee would be of great benefit to others across continents. Where possible, the evaluators connected such grantees, but it is evident that sustained facilitation – of the kind UNDEF is not currently able to perform due to resource constraints – would be required to maximise the impact of the exchange. Third, UNDEF could increase its nimbleness and flexibility: many CSOs lamented the long application process, signalling that this often amounts to a 12-month time-lapse between application and implementation. If this process cannot be shortened, UNDEF should be more flexible in other ways. In many cases, after one year either: the context has dramatically changed and the project requires revision; costs have changed and the budget requires adjustments; or, the CSO is over-stretched having since

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<sup>28</sup> The details of project flaws are covered in the Case Study Supplement.

been awarded other contracts, for example. Enabling the CSO to revise and/or defer implementation would improve impact. Fourth, UNDEF could better use its pivotal position within the UN system to act as a bridge between civil society and Member States on the one hand, and between civil society and the rest of the UN system on the other in order to address restrictions on civil society and human rights violations respectively. Fifth, the majority of case studies reveal that a two-year funding cycle is insufficient to sustain results; without additional funding, in many cases, the grantee risks losing momentum and/or support at a critical moment in the project's life cycle. And, lastly, as with all international engagements, injecting funds into fragile contexts can have some adverse consequences, including the augmentation of competition between civil society actors. UNDEF could seek to use its engagements to foster cooperation between CSOs, by requiring greater collaboration as a pre-requisite for support.

50. The evaluators are aware of Advisory Board discussions requesting revisions to evaluation frequency and modalities. It is evident that UNDEF could better understand its impact and increase its learning, if they are open to changing the evaluation strategy and modality; UNDEF needs information during the project (to help the grantee change its programming); after the project (for UNDEF learning purposes); and long after the project closure (to have a more comprehensive understanding of impact). **The question needs to be asked: are evaluations the best modality for achieving these goals?** UNDEF could also do more, more broadly speaking, to stay in touch with former grantees to monitor and understand outcomes and impact, on grantees, beneficiaries and the context of the countries in question. For example, in Rwanda, neither of the projects visited by one of the evaluators had been evaluated by Transtec, and yet both were extremely impressive and could serve as models for other CSOs working in challenging contexts. Similarly, in Georgia the grantee worked on formalizing a law to help people with disabilities; the Transtec evaluation – conducted at the end of the project - suggested that the organization was unlikely to achieve its goals or any meaningful results. One year later, the law was passed and was given Presidential approval during the visit of the evaluator. This result was made possible thanks to UNDEF funding and the excellent work of the grantee; without the visit of the UNDEF evaluator, however, these results would never have been known.

#### **Text box five: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF's 'impact'**

In **Lebanon**, the Permanent Peace Movement, was awarded a grant to promote and enable youth to realise their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives and society at large, through a wide range of empowerment and conflict resolution activities; the activities were designed to help overcome the rigid sectarian and highly polarised cultural and political environment in Lebanon, and to enable youth to cooperate across these entrenched divides. The impact of this project on the youth that participated should not be underestimated. Bringing together youth from different sectarian groups, both young boys and girls, from across all six governorates is an impressive feat that is difficult to comprehend for those unfamiliar with the Lebanese context. It involved extensive trust-building endeavours with the parents of those youth involved – not least given the spiralling security context at the time - and a leap of faith for those organising and leading the implementation of the project that the youth would be able to overcome the prejudices instilled in them by their families, their communities and the media.

For the majority of these youth, it was the very first time they had ever met and interacted with someone of a different faith, let alone become such close friends; for others, it was the first time they even had the opportunity to leave their community, so having the chance to visit parts of Lebanon they had only read or heard about on television or radio left a huge

mark on them. Youth have gone onto develop meaningful friendships and to appreciate the fact that they now have friends from all parts of the country, and from all religious sects and also across Lebanese-Palestinian divides. As one member of the Youth Council underscored in one of the focus group sessions held for this evaluation: “I used to be shy; I couldn't speak in front of anyone. I only knew people from my region, and when meeting someone else I didn't know what I could and couldn't say. I didn't go to a very open minded school. I didn't know how to behave. I was someone who used to stay at the home always, but now I've met these great people, I try to understand and to appreciate them, and straight way they liked me. And it's very easy to understand other people and become friends...now I have friends and skype with people who live far away. We gained traits that don't just go away, things that will stick for life. We didn't just learn and throw away into the sea. It will help us moving forward”.

Similarly, in **Jordan**, the Jordanian Center for Civic Education was awarded a grant to strengthen CSOs in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia, and to establish a network to promote women's issues. The engagement focused on educating CSO members – both men and women – on human rights conventions, women's rights in constitutions, and providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to form a network able to undertake advocacy and awareness campaigns that strengthen women's rights and enhance democratic reforms. The major focus of the project was changing the mind-set of men, and empowering women; JCCE underscored the nature of the challenges faced by women in the Middle East: “We live in a patriarchal society where men are raised to think they are superior to women and have to remain in control”.

Focus groups conducted in Jordan demonstrated some impressive results. As one man stated: “prior to the project, women were insignificant to me, they were not an active part of society. We have a domesticated view of women – she is a mother, a maid, etc., but no more. However, with time, we came to realise that women have the right to speak, and work, and to become an active part of society”. For another participant, the project gave him cause to reflect on the ways his sisters had been treated differently to him when they were growing up: “I would watch my sister cry, but only now do I realise how much they had their rights denied, and how much I upset them – I have apologised to them”, he said. All male participants emphasised that in their relationships, and for their families things would now be different thanks to the project: “male children typically receive more attention and more love, but I will be sure to give equal attention to both; I want to raise them to feel equal and to express their opinions equally”.

### ***Sustainability***

51. It is difficult to know the extent to which the 600+ organisations supported by UNDEF are still active since 99% of those surveyed state that they are still active, but it is highly probably that all 'inactive' CSOs did not respond to the survey. However, it is evident from the 20 case studies conducted that, **for smaller CSOs especially, the impact of UNDEF funding has provided instrumental building blocks for their development.** UNDEF support increased grantee legitimacy amongst beneficiaries, therefore presumably leading to higher probability of successful project implementation (if beneficiary engagement and *trust* is considered a pre-requisite for successful implementation). It also increased the standing of CSOs in the eyes of donors; grantees consistently mentioned that working with the UN sends a clear message that the grantee has “its institutional management and financial mechanisms in order”, and is a “trusted entity”. In addition to the heightened positive perception amongst donors, UNDEF's guidance process transfers technical skills to CSOs that they would not otherwise have had, including how to: 'justify' a project by

writing a solid project rationale; produce a robust logical framework; develop SMART indicators, baselines and targets; and produce a detailed budget. All of these elements form part of any proposal and many stated that they had since gone onto successfully apply for funds from others.

52. Since project design, however, is only one aspect of a successful CSO's life's-span (project implementation, M&E, management systems, financial resources, external relations, etc. being just a selection of other key areas), **support on project design is necessary but insufficient to ensure grantee sustainability**. If UNDEF chooses to be a 'CSO-oriented' entity, it will need to build capacity in other areas to ensure it has successfully strengthened the CSO in question. Indeed, there is a risk that the UN 'stamp of approval' is providing a false sense of security to other donors that the CSO is more developed and institutionally savvy than really is. It should be noted that the impact of the guidance process is significantly reduced and/or non-existent where the grantee: i) already has significant experience with donors (i.e. 'a good track record'); ii) is an international NGO; iii) outsources the process to consultants (this is a practice that should be actively discouraged by UNDEF).

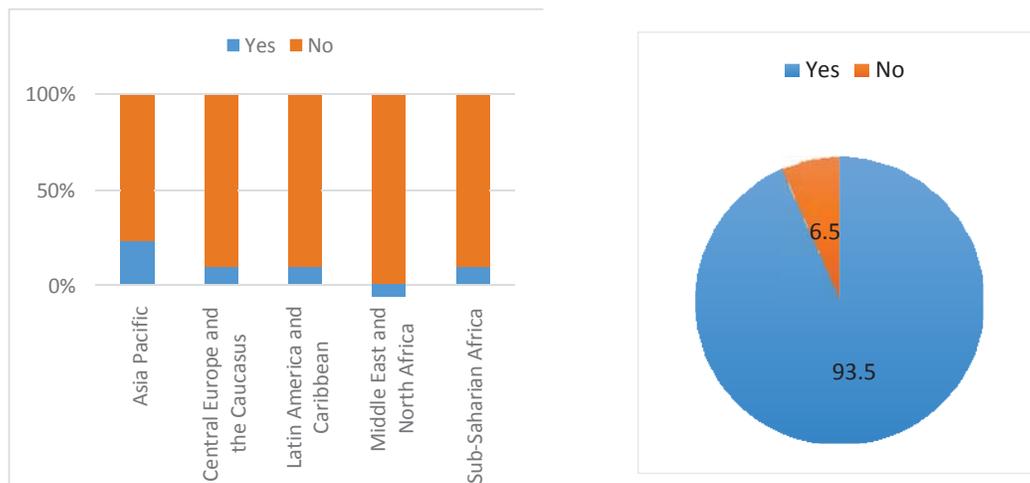


Figure Nine: Could you have implemented the project w/o UNDEF funding? Figure Ten: Ongoing contact with beneficiaries?

53. In terms of the sustainability of the project itself, and the benefits to beneficiaries, the conclusion is less clear-cut. **Sustainability is a key area where all international entities, tend to fall short as there is a considerable 'fine line' between ensuring sustainability and creating dependency**. Questionnaire results demonstrate that UNDEF funding was essential to 86% of respondents, pointing to UNDEF's ability to fund projects outside the traditional 'donor niche'. The above graph (Figure Nine) suggests, furthermore, that UNDEF funding is especially critical in Africa and the MENA region, although many of those interviewed also suggested that UNDEF funding is extremely appreciated in middle-income countries, in Europe and Latin America, for example, which struggle to find funding for democracy-related projects because donors have other, competing priorities. Out of those surveyed, 68% of projects funded by UNDEF are still active, but this takes into account those projects from Rounds 7-9 that are still ongoing, and/or undergoing closure; this fact, combined with the 32% of inactive projects, suggests that at least two thirds of projects, at best, were not sustained once UNDEF support ceased. However, 93% of respondents – evidently excluding the CSOs likely to have closed down – are still in contact with beneficiaries after the project, due to: other projects implemented with the

same target group; the small community where the CSO is embedded; a desire to ‘re-use’ trained participants in other projects; or, simply because personal relationships have been built and stakeholders choose to remain in touch.

54. The case studies demonstrate that, while **projects themselves suffer from sustainability issues (and tend to finish when UNDEF funding finishes), the impacts of the projects on beneficiaries tend to be long-lasting**. The knowledge and skills imparted to beneficiaries during the course of project implementation do not “suddenly disappear”, as stated by several beneficiaries – not least since projects tend to impact individuals in profoundly meaningful, and often profoundly personal ways. For example: in Jordan, the ‘Freedom Messengers’ continue to integrate human rights-related messages into their performances in theatres, concerts and films, despite the fact that the project has ended; in Rwanda, PWDs said their lives had been transformed by the project in too many ways to count; in Liberia, a civic engagement project imparted skills and knowledge that many young people are taking into the next electoral cycle; furthermore, youth said they had learnt “how to be a good citizen” - with impacts on their daily lives. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, beneficiaries engaged in a women empowerment project “lost the fear to participate” in political processes, and the organization’s ideas were transformed into a course offered to all students at the University.

#### **Text box six: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF’s ‘sustainability’**

In **Sri Lanka**, the grantee IMADR was very clear where the sustainability of the project lies. It is not a matter of funding, but tied to the process of empowerment of the beneficiaries. The project is a means for establishing a longer-term strategy that it did not initiate, and which it will not ‘finish’. This thinking is expressed clearly in the voice of the CSO. “There are two ways I could answer (about sustainability); the institutional answer and personal answer. It has nothing to do in having more resources. Personally it is my commitment and I am in politics, so whatever happens next year, I will continue to work on this. Sustainability is assured in an unorganized manner because it is within the women and they will continue to have political participation. The women’s political academy is the formal thing that this project will leave us with, and representation of different level (national and grassroots)...The real sustainability is that these women have lost the fear of participate. They will receive a certificate for other efforts but really the sustainability is in them”.

In **Jordan**, the Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) created the ‘Freedom Messengers’, a group that consists of around 20 artists with no previous background in human rights and activism. The artists were engaged in a highly innovative, experiential training on human rights, conflict resolution, communication and advocacy. Following the training, artists who had “previously focused on love and life”, went onto produce ten short films on citizenship, the right to monitor government, issues related to ‘honour crimes’, and the rights of the child; two music albums on creating a culture of freedom and human rights; four songs on the ‘right to know’; and, a broad series of plays and sketches on related themes, including women empowerment – all of which were distributed widely.

The group has proven to be relatively sustainable, thanks to the initiative of CDFJ and the Freedom Messengers themselves. Following the extensive work undertaken in the context of the UNDEF project, CDFJ received support from the King Abdullah II Fund, enabling them to continue support for the Freedom Messengers. CDFJ, in recognition of the overly Amman-oriented nature of the project to date, has also begun trying to form Freedom Messenger networks in the regions throughout Jordan. Around 15 of the 20 original Freedom Messengers

also remain actively involved in activities related to the projects original goals: one was hired to make a television show concerning human rights issues; many of the others are now training and mentoring other artists who wish to be involved in similar social and political issues; and, almost all remain willingly at the disposal of CDFJ and can be mobilised in support of diverse causes. However, in the long run, the network could benefit from some degree of formalisation, ideally independently of CDFJ to enable the network to be seen as an entity that can be drawn upon by other, even non-media affiliated entities, on social causes.

55. **Some projects were more successful than others at creating more concrete, sustainable platforms and processes:** for example, thanks to the establishment of a quota of participation for women in Sri Lanka, local councils will now have 25% representation of women in the local council, instead of 4%. It is important to consider the consequences for the country as a whole, and the multiple processes set in motion by these changes. Another project in Moldova drastically improved state awareness of veterinarian care as a consequence of a local investigation implemented by NGOs and local media, which denounced the level of corruption of the previous existing services. In the same country, also as a result of cooperation within NGOs and local media, an investigative report on chemical deposits brought the issue to the attention of the central state: the deposits were found and removed. However, these were exceptions rather than the rule. Given these preliminary, positive outcomes of most projects, the short project timeframe is highly problematic; for too many of the grantees, “just as the project started to show results, the funding stopped”.
56. Indeed, if UNDEF – in its ‘project-oriented’ approach - seeks to have a strategic and sustainable impact on the nature of democracy, then longer-term project funding is certainly required. **A longer time horizon is not the only way in which UNDEF could enhance the sustainability of projects**, however. Stronger projects, for example, could be offered a second round of funding through UNDEF or, as suggested by several New York stakeholders, “sun-setting projects could be presented to the Advisory Board”, members of which may be willing to offer bilateral funding. UNDEF is also well-placed, if under-resourced, to play a larger role in building the capacity of grantees to develop fundraising strategies before the project closes, using its relationships and knowledge to assist the CSO. Sustainability should, however, go beyond the project itself: UNDEF is well-placed to explore ways to ensure technical knowledge passed onto the grantee throughout the process of project design and implementation is successfully transferred to other, weaker CSOs who have few opportunities to gain such knowledge – not least since UNDEF is one of the few entities providing capacity-building in such domains. Moreover, regardless of the length of time UNDEF chooses to fund grantees, sustainability will be increased by moving the evaluation from the end to the middle of the project – as underscored by almost all grantees. This would mean an entirely different approach to evaluation: from an evaluation focused on accountability, to one focused on learning and actively supporting the CSO to improve the second half of the project implementation phase, and its capacity more generally speaking. Lastly, creating more opportunities for an exchange of knowledge between CSOs – which is currently largely absent from the UNDEF approach – would also allow for insights on enhancing sustainability to be shared. This would mean making sustainability a more prominent part of UNDEF’s strategy when engaging with grantees.
57. Besides challenges associated with the sustainability of projects, **there are significant concerns about the sustainability of UNDEF itself – a concern echoed by many members of the Advisory Board.** Annual contributions to UNDEF have been diminishing since its inception in 2005; it began with \$27 million, dropping to \$23 million in 2006, \$15

million in 2007 and, despite a ‘spike’ in funding in 2008 when it received \$24 million, contributions have since been averaging 10 million a year and, at the time of writing (see Figure Eleven, below), UNDEF has only received around \$3 million for 2016. This puts UNDEF in the fragile position of receiving less than it is expending if we consider that it funds around \$10 million worth of projects annually, with operational costs of >15%. UNDEF receives no income from the regular budget and is therefore 100% dependent on XB funding; this gives the organization more operational leeway than other Secretariat bodies, but it makes its situation precarious. While UNDEF has received funds from a total of 45 Member States, at least 30 of those contributions - while undoubtedly appreciated by UNDEF - are largely tokenistic; these contributions do, however, ensure the Fund remains representative. UNDEF is mainly supported by ten major donors, whose contributions are in decline (See Figure Twelve, below, for top five donors). Furthermore, amongst those donors, only one has signed a multi-year agreement and the absence of ‘traditional’ donors, and a broader base of donors including foundations and corporations, is striking.

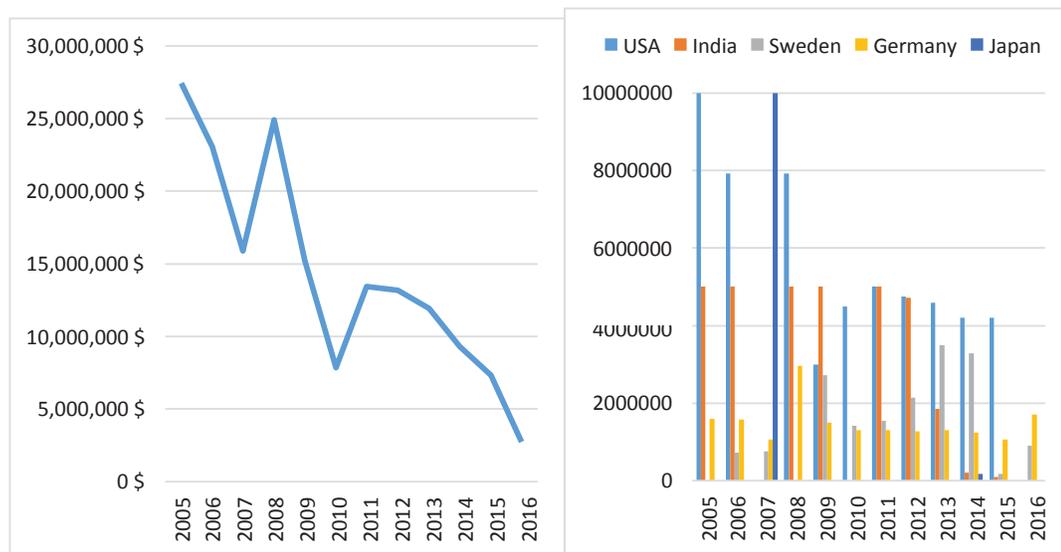


Figure Eleven: Total contributions 2005-/2016    Figure Twelve: Contributions of top five donors 2005-2016

58. Declining financial support for UNDEF mirrors developments seen in other UN entities, such as UNDP and is not tied to relevance (which is high), its effectiveness (which is good), its efficiency (which is impressive), nor its impact (which is considerable – to the extent that it can be ascertained at all), but can be explained to a certain extent by: fiercely competing priorities for Member States, including humanitarian emergencies; sharply decreasing ODA budgets among many donors; and, a lack of prioritization of multilateral support for civil society, along with UNDEF’s low profile in the UN System. Some New York stakeholders felt this situation was exacerbated by UNDEFs “inability to sell itself” and a “pre-occupation with avoiding making too much noise”<sup>29</sup>; the evaluators support the notion that UNDEF could be doing more to ascertain, then promote, disseminate and advocate for its excellent work. **The evaluators also believe that, given UNDEFs unique position within the system, it is less precarious than it seems to believe or convey:** its ‘lifeline’ is not threatened by those few Member States who may disagree with its approach - who either do not support UNDEF at all or who give such small funds that, in the event of them being withdrawn, would reduce the ‘representativeness’ of UNDEF but not its viability. Far from it, a more vocal position on the part of the Fund would undoubtedly win

<sup>29</sup> Both quotes taken from New York stakeholders.

it many ‘friends’ who *do* share its goals - all of which as previously mentioned - are outlined in the UNDHR, the Millennium Declaration, the SDGs, and encapsulated in the notion of “we the peoples” – which few Member States can dispute.

59. More importantly, putting the current financial climate aside, UNDEF’s declining funding base could be improved by a three-prong strategy: **a communications strategy to increase visibility; a more robust fundraising strategy to increase resources; and, a more concerted focus on leadership rather than management.** UNDEF’s current low visibility is due to a multitude of factors some tied to the above “fear of making too much noise”, but many are much more concrete: unlike many other entities in the UN, UNDEF does not have a formal, high-level spokesperson for the organization. While UNDEF does have a ‘Celebrity Board Member’ who has presented several UNDEF project documentaries, including to the Board and other audiences, these activities could be scaled up. The position of ‘Celebrity Board Member’, (not mentioned by any of those engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation), is currently filled by Jeffrey Wright, but such a position is not formally recognised within the UN System; UNDEF does not have a Special Representative, nor a Special Envoy, or a dedicated ‘Messenger of Peace’, charged with raising awareness about the issues affecting civil society and the Fund.<sup>30</sup> The evaluators and many of New York stakeholders engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation support the notion that UNDEF may benefit from such visibility. The Secretary-General, his spokesperson and the Department of Public Information (DPI) more broadly speaking, are also not consistently engaged in the work of UNDEF; the Secretary-General could be considered to play a largely ‘rubber-stamping’ role for the Fund and does not regularly raise issues related to UNDEF or its work. UNDEF also does not appear to have any significant links with the NGO Committee, a committee which is strongly supported by a wide range of donors.<sup>31</sup> UNDEF would benefit from a ‘revamped’ communication strategy, which focuses on promoting the voices of grantees, the issues they face and the results they achieve – with a broader audience in mind (placing grantee videos on the website/twitter, for example, is necessary but not sufficient to get the message across).
60. Second, **UNDEF would similarly benefit from a more comprehensive fundraising strategy**<sup>32</sup>; the strategy should identify how it intends to increase its donor base, and contributions from existing donors in order to cover and, ideally, increase the finances it has available to it.<sup>33</sup> UNDEF could consider developing a Multi-Year Appeal, for example, similar to that managed by DPA for XB funds. The Appeal, released on an annual basis, provides a strategic overview of the key issues related to DPA and where funds will be spent to best address these issues; donors provide pooled (ODA-eligible) funding,<sup>34</sup> and most donors contribute for three years. Furthermore, each year DPA also releases an Annual Report detailing the ways in which the funds were spent and how they contributed to DPA’s goals.<sup>35</sup> A strategy of this nature would respond to the multiple calls from the Advisory Board members for a strategic overview of UNDEF’s activities, while

<sup>30</sup> UNDEF has engaged with Jeffrey Wright as their ‘Celebrity Board Member’, but given that none of the interviewees engaged with during this process – at HQ or in the field – mentioned this figure, the statement stands.

<sup>31</sup> Covered in greater detail under ‘Coherence’. This view was supported by several stakeholders.

<sup>32</sup> UNDEF has informed the evaluators that, “UNDEF is currently in talks with two important potential new donors, and has added at least one important new donor to its base in the past year”; this information however was not available to the evaluators/had not occurred during the information-gathering phase of the project. It should also be noted that engagement with two donors, which is good news, does not in of itself constitute a fundraising strategy. The question remains: How does UNDEF intend to ensure it can cover and, where possible, expand its donor base in the months and years ahead?

<sup>33</sup> In the second round of comments, UNDEF informed the evaluators that: “Since the information gathering phase of the evaluation two significant donors have contributed to the Fund for the first time in a number of years, and two further donors have increased their contributions. Additional new contributions are also expected. Contributions to UNDEF in 2016 will be higher than in 2015 (the first time there has been positive growth since 2012). These results are as a consequence of targeted and coordinated efforts to mobilize resources by UNDEF during the period of the evaluation that are now bearing fruit. (see attached updated contributions table).”

<sup>34</sup> In rare occasions, donors are able to offer earmarked funding, but this is discouraged.

<sup>35</sup> Both the Appeal and the Annual Report are outsourced to a consultant and is very cost-effective process.

simultaneously attracting additional donors since it is the type of document representatives can easily share with their capitals; many bilateral donors may also come to the realisation that the comparative advantages of funding through UNDEF dramatically outweigh any of the advantages associated with bilateral funding of CSOs. As one New York stakeholder underscored, “UNDEF does not seem to realise that it is *its* responsibility to provide a strategic overview to the Board: Member States are simply not going to read through dozens of evaluations to look for it”.

61. Lastly, regarding management versus leadership: UNDEF’s current Executive Head is extremely well-respected amongst grantees and many Member States, and therefore well-placed to play the required leadership role at UNDEF<sup>36</sup>; however, **since the Fund is currently under-staffed, there are many demands on her time.**

#### *Coherence*

62. The issue of coherence raises an important question: **To what extent can and should UNDEF – as the only entity that provides direct support to civil society actors – be ‘coherent’ within a UN System dominated by Member State-led processes?** The projects supported by UNDEF, after all, are developed from a substantive perspective by civil society actors in response to local demands, whereas other UN agencies – including those that work through CSOs – do so on the basis of an agenda negotiated with governments. Within the UN system, therefore, UNDEF is something of an anomaly. In this regard, the evaluators believe that UNDEF’s current approach of ensuring projects are CSO-generated, but selected to some degree on the basis of their coherence within the UN System through the PCG is the right approach. Other New York stakeholders concur: to overly align the substance of the projects (by being more prescriptive about the contents) would, some believe, lead UNDEF to be “being more reactive and oriented to the latest pressures” of crisis and conflict zones, for example, to the detriment of supporting projects that respond to local needs, in a manner determined by local actors as they do currently.
63. **UNDEF’s coherence is therefore, epitomised by the complementary role it plays within the UN System** - complementing the democracy-oriented work of a multitude of other UN actors, but from the perspective of civil society. This is a much-needed niche to be filled within the UN System. UNDEF’s collaboration with the PCG in this regard is well-appreciated across the UN system, as it provides an opportunity for UN colleagues to consult with their field counterparts regarding the appropriateness or otherwise of selected projects. This role is reinforced by UNDEF’s ‘active role’ within both the Working Group on Democracy and the Executive Group on Peace and Security. UNDEF’s efforts in this regard, however, are limited to project selection on the one hand, and to arrangements for International Day of Democracy on the other, including selecting the theme and providing support on the development of the agenda in collaboration with other actors, such as International IDEA. While important, International Day of Democracy-related events do not seem to have a significant bearing on UNDEF’s work, nor particularly on UNDEF’s level of visibility.
64. Where the organization does not fulfil its potential regarding its efforts to be coherent, however, is attributed to the absence of a feedback mechanism between what is happening

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<sup>36</sup> UNDEF has indicated that “The recent arrival of a new Deputy Executive Head for Management should help free up the Executive Head from everyday managerial concerns to focus fully on the strategic. A range of innovations have already been undertaken, such as timely thematic project focus on refugee empowerment, youth against extremism, and accountability on work towards the Sustainable Development Goals; as well as projects outside the annual project cycle to respond to emerging needs. The Executive Head also plays an active role in advocacy, public speaking, media and resource mobilization, as well as liaising with EOSG and DPI on coordinated messaging; active engagement with the Advisory Board on all issues related to project vetoes and challenges facing civil society”

in the field with regards to civil society, human rights violations and government restrictions, and the UN System. As already underscored, UNDEF misses an important opportunity to ensure its unrivalled access to CSOs – CSOs which by all accounts appear to trust UNDEF over and above other UN entities as evidenced by the survey responses (see paragraph 66 below) - translates into actionable information for UN actors across the System best placed to respond. This includes interacting with members of the PCG and ensuring they are in touch with their counterparts in the field, but also with the GA and the Security Council; UNDEF is well-placed, furthermore, to promote a better understanding of democracy through the insights garnered from its network of CSOs, and to provide inputs for the political agenda of the Secretariat, helping to balance its predominantly Member State lens of analysis. To summarise, **UNDEF has the potential to develop a knowledge management structure for the UN System on issues related to democracy and civil society.** As previously stated, the UN system is currently assisting UNDEF to achieve its own mandate, but, conversely, UNDEF is not sufficiently contributing to the achievement of the UN System-wide mandate, but is well placed to do so.

#### **Text box seven: Case study demonstrating UNDEF's 'coherence'**

In Liberia, the Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) was awarded a grant to provide predominantly rural women with greater access to information through the radio – and through the use of mobile technology specifically - and to increase the capacity of media organizations to report on gender-related issues. While the project raised women's awareness about their rights, increase their levels of participation in issues affecting their lives, and helped them to begin countering patriarchal dynamics in their communities, the project could have improved coherence on a number of levels. The project would have been strengthened, for example, by the active involvement of men; efforts to sensitise men to women's rights and related issues was not a significant part of the project.

Given some of the sensitivities of the issues they were working on, it would also have been helpful to connect women participating in their programme with organizations in Monrovia that assist women victims of sexual violence for free, for example. Given the difficult nature of criminal dynamics and gang violence impacting the project, it may have also been helpful if LIWOMAC had brought these issues to the attention of the national authorities and the UN as soon as they became apparent and through more direct means than the radio. The project certainly initiated important processes of change; however, had UNDEF been more actively involved in the implementation of the project, it would have been well-placed to advise LIWOMAC on the one hand, and serve as a liaison with other UN entities best placed to deal with such issues on the other. Such engagements did eventually occur, but only because the evaluator 'raised the alarm' in responses to concerns about human rights violations. The swift action of UNDEF, LIWOMAC, VOSIEDA and the UN led to important changes on the ground, demonstrating what can be achieved when UNDEF takes steps to enhance the coherence of its work, and to capitalise upon its pivotal position in the UN System.

65. Putting this issue aside, **there are other areas where UNDEF could increase coherence with UN actors.** Many New York stakeholders believe there is greater scope for collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF); the peacebuilding architecture is currently represented by PBSO,<sup>37</sup> but the evaluators assume that all such entities may become more active if UNDEF is able to

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<sup>37</sup> In reaction to the evaluation, UNDEF has indicated that discussions are currently taking place with PBSO. UNDEF states: "UNDEF has recently initiated discussions with the PBSO sharing good practice on ways of working with civil society, so as to share UNDEF's wealth of experience in directly supporting civil society while PBSO has so far been largely limited to work through governments".

produce information relevant to peacebuilding-oriented projects that will further their mandate in the field. As previously mentioned, collaboration with the NGO Committee, where Member States are well-represented and where UNDEF may be able to facilitate – or at least propose – NGO status for successful UNDEF grantees also makes considerable sense. The Human Rights Council is another natural partner for UNDEF and the 47 participating Member States would undoubtedly be interested to learn more about UNDEF’s work, just as The Council could provide inputs to UNDEF concerning priority countries that would benefit from UNDEF’s support. Lastly, there is certainly greater scope for coherence at the field level: currently, the UN’s role on the ground is limited to ‘milestone’ events, which serve UNDEF’s audit purposes but little more (30% of grantees surveyed have never had contact with UNDP or another UN agency and 21% ‘rarely’ in any case). The technical and substantive expertise of UN counterparts in the field, however, would undoubtedly be of great benefit to UNDEF grantees and UNDEF grantees, similarly, have knowledge about local realities and ‘local approaches’ that would be of great interest to UN entities. Creating a link in the field between grantees and UN entities would not only improve coherence but undoubtedly also make a contribution to sustainability.

66. Coherence with non-UN entities is not currently a focus area for UNDEF; **it does not collaborate actively with regional organizations, other democracy-promoting entities, nor academia.** That is not to say that there isn’t scope for such collaboration. One significant area where UNDEF could encourage coherence is by requesting CSOs during the application process or project design phase to identify other democratization-support actors active in their country, and to provide some insights on which issues they are supporting, including actors such as Open Society, NDI, IRI, etc. This would help ensure that UNDEF maintains its niche focus of being an actor able to support CSOs that might not otherwise receive support, a significant comparative advantage for UNDEF. CSOs could also be encouraged to anchor their work in both UN-related frameworks, and regional frameworks of their respective regions. The AU, for example, has extensive – and already agreed upon – frameworks in the domain of democracy, governance, and human rights. By encouraging CSOs to anchor their work in regional frameworks, they would acquire additional leverage through which they can foster change in their selected areas, while simultaneously building links with multi-lateral, regional entities. There is also scope for the Advisory Board to then use its networks to at least make regional entities aware of UN-funded projects that support their regional-level objectives, and whether there are actions that regional entities can take in support of such objectives – thus producing a ‘two-pronged approach’. Lastly, UNDEF’s database contains a wealth of information that will be of interest to academic researchers working in the field of democratisation; given its efforts to be a leader in transparency, UNDEF should consider opening up its data-base to such researchers – which would undoubtedly be of benefit not only to UNDEF, but to both academics and practitioners working in this space.
67. Encouragingly, **35% of survey respondents in the field indicate that UNDEF’s work on democratization is much better than that of comparable organizations, 48% ‘better’, 15% as ‘equal’ and only 2% as ‘less relevant’ than other democratization organizations.** Grantee respondents feel that UNDEF’s work on democratization compared to that of others would be further improved by introducing longer funding times, and more flexibility concerning project modifications. In a similar vein, 30% of respondents felt UNDEF’s support was extremely aligned with other international actors in their country, 52% ‘well aligned’, only 17% were less satisfied with the level of alignment, and 1% disagreed that there was any alignment at all. Respondents feel that UNDEF’s alignment and cooperation with international actors in the field would be improved through more visible in-country communication, and the building of donor and CSO networks for

knowledge-sharing. Interestingly, only 24% of respondents rate the work of the UN in their country as excellent, 50% as good, 12% as sufficient and 14% in need of improvement. These figures can be compared to those perceptions of UNDEF's work, whereby 67% have an excellent opinion, 29% believe its work is 'very good,' leaving only 3% who felt it was merely 'sufficient' and 1% that called for improvements. During the course of field visits, UNDEF grantees indicated that they "trust" UNDEF more than other UN entities, given its privileged access to play a facilitating role between civil society and the UN System.

### *Comparative advantage*

68. While not a 'criteria' for evaluation according to the OECD-DAC guidelines, the TOR and many Member States requested more clarification on UNDEF's comparative advantage. The 'top ten' are listed below and are based predominantly on the views and insights of HQ and field-based stakeholders:

- I. **Unique:** The only UN entity focusing on support to civil society in a Member State-dominated system. The normative value of the UN flag confers legitimacy and visibility on civil society actors working in niche domains through the UN brand, and also provides a degree of 'protection' in sensitive contexts. This can also 'open doors' for civil society actors giving them access to state realms, greater funding sources and high levels of interaction e.g. at the national or regional level.
- II. **Grass-roots driven:** Bottom-up project generation that ensures projects respond to the needs of local actors, and are implemented in a culturally-sensitive manner. Consequently, UNDEF is also perceived differently to other UN actors, since UNDEF grantees do not implement UN strategies, but their own, unique ideas. Compared to other actors, grantees consider that UNDEF does not 'instrumentalise' grantees to fulfil donor objectives, but lets them decide upon and achieve self-defined objectives.
- III. **Strengthens capacity and ownership:** Provides technical guidance to CSOs with low capacity, strengthening both the design of projects and CSOs skills. The guidance is provided in a way that grantees consider to be respectful of their original ideas, and monitoring is conducted in a way that respects constraints that may occur during project implementation. UNDEF's approach confers absolute ownership of the project on the grantee.
- IV. **Privileged access to local contexts:** While democracy is an inherently political subject, UNDEF's involvement in this area is perceived as being impartial and not tied to a specifically 'Western' agenda. Other donors, including many private foundations and other multilateral entities, are perceived as having 'hidden agendas'. Consequently, UNDEF is able to create entry-points for civil society growth in complex contexts, especially in contexts where bilateral actors are unable to work.
- V. **Promotes government involvement:** Fosters government buy-in for CSO activities, contributing to stronger state-society relations. Member States, furthermore, can have confidence in projects that have been through the UNDEF 'vetting' process, and which are monitored by UNDEF.
- VI. **Proactive, not reactive:** UNDEF doesn't "follow the latest trends" but provides global support in both low- and middle-income countries, in supposedly 'high'

and ‘low’ conflict countries, but which all require democracy support since democracy is a process not an end in itself. It is also well-positioned to provide support to small CSOs that may otherwise struggle to find donor funding.

- VII. Unrivalled access to knowledge and networks:** UNDEF’s governance system enables it to leverage its extensive network of actors involved in the PCG specifically and UN System more broadly, which have global presence and access – including through the RC-system and UNCT’s; it can also draw upon its globally representative Advisory Board; no other donor has access to 193 Member States. UNDEF also is able to “take the pulse of civil society” through its extensive, global network of UNDEF grantees, past and present.
- VIII. Highly organised, efficient, and responsive team:** Well-developed control systems in place, creating the potential for UNDEF to focus on higher risk projects that test new models/‘out of the box’ types of democracy support. Extremely cost-efficient and “well-oiled machine”. UNDEF is prompt in responding to requests from HQ entities and grantees alike; for grantees, such high responsiveness from a donor is rare.
- IX. Positioned to nurture dialogue:** Unlike any other democratization entity, UNDEF is uniquely positioned to actively facilitate dialogue between UN Member States on what democracy means, and the socio-political- and culturally appropriate conceptions of such a term.
- X. Trusted:** UNDEF is fully trusted by CSOs who have the overwhelming impression that UNDEF “truly cares” about the CSO and its goals. This puts it in a privileged position of being able to serve as a trusted-interlocutor between the grassroots actors on the one hand, and Member States and the UN System on other.

#### **Text box eight: Case studies demonstrating UNDEF’s ‘comparative advantage’**

The comparative advantage of UNDEF is well-demonstrated by the Pax Press project in Rwanda. Despite the brevity of this project, Pax Press believes that the collaboration with UNDEF had a significant impact on the organization – not least since very few donors are willing to engage with media associations in Rwanda due to the enduring negative perception that the media accrued as a result of their role in the genocide in 1994. On the rare occasions that donors are willing to support media associations– in Rwanda but also in other countries - there is a tendency to focus on ‘high politics’ and coverage of political parties, elections and other ‘top down’ processes. Support from UNDEF in the media domain, therefore, was a particularly welcome opportunity for Pax Press to demonstrate the impartial, professional and instrumental role of the media in fostering a more inclusive and democratic country from the ‘bottom up’.

Despite the lack of a permanent presence in Rwanda combined with the absence of visits on the part of UNDEF personnel during the course of the project, Pax Press found that digital communication was highly efficient and contributed to better-designed and better-implemented project. The Results-Based Management (RBM) approach used by UNDEF was new to Pax Press but the process of developing the logical framework helped them to refine and better understand the project with a level of precision they were not used to; it enabled them to fully comprehend the linkage between their activities and the objectives they hoped to achieve and it is a tool they now use when developing other projects, and one which they

believe other CSOs in-country would greatly benefit from. While the project design process was highly rigorous, once completed they felt that a level of trust had been fostered between Pax Press and UNDEF, which then left them “free to work as we needed to in order to get the job done”.

As a result of the collaboration with UNDEF, Pax Press is now well-recognised for its work on community debates and media professionalization, stating that “suddenly everyone was speaking about us and our work”; the community debate is seen broadly as being a “brand” of Pax Press, one which has encouraged other organizations to use this same methodology for fostering participation and dialogue. As a result of UNDEF support, Pax Press received funds from the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) to work further on transparency and local accountability initiatives. Moreover, Pax Press has now achieved a government-awarded certificate which underscores its work in support of local populations. The professionalization of Pax Press journalists has also been recognised in the form of multiple formal agreements signed with other media organizations keen to participate in their networks, and non-media CSOs who wish for their work to be promoted by Pax Press throughout the country.

UNDEF also has a significant comparative advantage in the **Middle East**. Working with UN bodies in Middle East is particularly beneficial since foreign funding can be a controversial issue and CSOs are sometimes accused of having a foreign or “hidden” agenda; furthermore, some foreign-funded government and politicians accuse CSOs of being spies - especially when funding comes from agencies affiliated to governments, such as USAID or EU, or other similar European agencies. The UN is being perceived as a more neutral body, since the UN is an intergovernmental organization, while some beneficiaries are not able to separate funding received from other countries from their political positions.

## VIII. Lessons learned and best practices

No.	Focus Area	Lesson Learnt	'Good' Practices/recommendations
1.	<b>General</b>	UNDEF is able to effectively convey a 'caring' attitude to CSOs, but supporting them to fulfil their own objectives.	UNDEF should continue to lend the UN brand to CSOs in need of both financial and political support.
2.		UNDEF is the 'voice of democracy', and carries an untarnished, impartial branding – enjoying the trust and confidence of NGOs and governments alike.	Given this extremely privileged position, UNDEF should explore ways to capitalise upon this trust to more proactively support CSOs by promoting their voices at HQ. UNDEF can also become a channel through which CSOs can communicate to other CSOs and States, and to share experiences.
3.		UNDEF support provides credibility ("stamp of approval"), enables bridge building with governments and other partners in-country, and provides greater visibility to the CSO in question, thereby increases the ability of the CSOs to undertake its work. In some context, however, the use of the UN banner is not helpful for achieving the project's objectives and should not be insisted upon.	UNDEF should be particularly sensitive to the importance of UN funding in contexts where funding from other sources – such as bilateral actors or regional organizations – proves to be problematic for the entity in question, and for its ability to achieve its mandate. When deciding which projects to fund, UNDEF should consider more carefully its comparative advantage vis-à-vis other actors. At the same time, UNDEF should remain flexible on the use of the UN logo and banner, letting CSOs use such materials at their discretion.
4.		UNDEF is insufficiently aware of its impact on CSOs, and on the context in which they operate, due to the absence of i) a theory of change ii) baselines iii) contact with CSOs beyond project implementation.	UNDEF would benefit from building a knowledge management system that enables it to understand its medium- to long-term impact on CSOs and the roles CSOs can play in fostering democracy. Similarly, UNDEF should define its Theory of Change in order to identify what its goals are and what can be assessed or not, according to the strategy implied by the TOC and the resulting hypothesis.
5.		Funding innovative projects implies a level of risk for UNDEF; however, in the context of the evaluation innovative projects have proven to be strategic, and often meaningful, with outstanding results and outcomes. Innovative projects can also provide a model for other CSOs.	Innovative ideas and approaches should be prioritized in the selection criteria in order to 'experiment' and provide lesson learnt for the Fund, stakeholders and CSOs.
7.		During the field visits, contacts with beneficiaries confirmed and validated what worked or not in the projects, and by this, corroborated which outputs became results and outcomes. In this sense, the lessons learned changed according to the beneficiaries' perceptions, and often diverged from the perceptions that could be ascertained only through the desk review.	UNDEF should infuse its analysis on lessons learned with views from the beneficiaries about the results and outcomes of its projects. This means re-focusing the lessons learned processes onto the beneficiaries, not the grantees – since the beneficiaries are the ultimate 'client' of the Fund.
8.		<b>HQ interactions</b>	UNDEF is well-placed to play a greater advocacy role in engaging in discreet dialogue with governments and/or through the Secretary-General or the General Assembly not only during the

		project selection phase, but also during project implementation when CSOs come across significant challenges that would benefit from UNDEF's impartial and unique positioning within the UN System.	Democracy' by increasing the knowledge derived from its projects and transmitting this to a broader audience.
9.		States, CSOs and, of course, the UN System could benefit from a deeper understanding of the experiences of CSOs and governments with processes of democratization.	UNDEF should Identify a model/system to gather this information and transmit it through different means to other States and CSOs to raise interest and provide positive experience of interaction between the state and civil society. One avenue is for UNDEF to engage more proactively, and substantively, with the GA, the UNSC, the Human Rights Council and other parts of the UN System.
10.		Members of the Advisory Board would prefer more substantive level of discussions with UNDEF - that go beyond UNDEF activities - on strategic issues related to the Fund. Many Member States are also prepared to play a more proactive role in supporting the Fund.	UNDEF should engage in discussions with Advisory Board members concerning different formats and modalities for giving Advisory Board members a more substantive and proactive role in supporting the work of the Fund, as well as exchanging insights on civil society and democracy.
11.	<b>Project selection and funding decisions</b>	While the Fund selects CSOs as entities, and often looks to their track record or relationships with other donors, many successful projects visited by the evaluators were built upon the prestige and efforts of a single person, often an 'insider mediator' or opinion leader.	UNDEF could consider adding another selection criteria that looks at the role of leading figures within the organisation, exploring his or her role through internet searches and through its relationships with other UN entities in the field.
12.		Rules around providing funding to vehicles, support staff costs, or to buy a property undermines efforts to support CSOs to generate sustainability for themselves.	UNDEF should explore limited support for core costs that would contribute to strengthening the sustainability of CSOs.
13.		The time-lapse between the application submitted by the grantee, and the beginning of the project, which in total can span a period of 18 months creates diverse problems for some CSOs: it can make it difficult to plan their workload, the context changes, and prices fluctuations, etc.	UNDEF should remain more flexible to changes (in both substance and budgets) and deferrals and/or explore ways to reduce the length of time between project submission and project design and implementation.
14.	<b>Project guidance</b>	The guidance process was useful to CSOs, especially those with little experience of results-based management. The majority of CSOs have gone onto use this process when applying for funds elsewhere. However, when the CSO struggles with this process they often outsource the process to consultants undermining the impact it can have on CSOs; similarly, international NGOs do not benefit from this process.	UNDEF should de-prioritise international entities and those entities with prior experience of working with international organizations in order to ensure the benefits of the guidance process are fully taken on board by CSOs (unless stronger CSOs are being used for security reasons and/or contemplating a parallel strengthening process for weaker CSOs, through a joint venture project.) Furthermore, CSOs should be actively discouraged from outsourcing this process to consultants.
15.		Project guidance related to budgets is not always sufficiently prudent; CSOs are not always realistic in their budgeting efforts and make attempts to be 'economical' to the detriment of project objectives, or their own staff.	UNDEF has an important role to play during the guidance process in ensuring that budgets are realistic and can account for changes, especially in volatile conflict or post-conflict contexts where; due to the timing for the guidance process, costs can vary considerably

			between the application and the final design of the project.
16.		Projects that are not conflict-sensitive or which do not put human rights and safety/security first are at risk of being counter-productive and even harmful.	UNDEF has an important role to play in ensuring projects do not only simply carry out a 'risk assessment', but that they are 100% conflict sensitive, regardless of whether the project takes place in a conflict/post-conflict context or not. Efforts should also be made to ensure safety and security is a priority. UNDEF should have an emergency protocol concerning how to act when harmful/potentially dangerous situations emerge due to the work of its grantees.
17.	<b>Project management</b>	UNDEF is not well-positioned to give specific socio-economic, cultural or political advice directly to CSOs due to the lack of country-specific desk officers, and lack of in-country expertise.	UNDEF should continue to work with UN partners in-country to provide assistance to CSOs, and find other ways to use these and/or new networks and relationships to provide additional capacity to CSOs where needed.
18.		Genuine ownership of the project is a better guarantee of performance and accountability than UNDEF milestones or other methods of verification. There is a balance to be struck between giving CSOs enough freedom to feel the project is 'theirs' and being so absent from the project management process that CSOs feel they have been 'abandoned'.	UNDEF should continue to ensure the project is fully 'owned' by the CSO in question, in line with their mandate and their own approach. Accompaniment is the preferred approach to working with CSOs to ensure this, over and above more direct 'training' methods, instruments, or in the absence of any project management process whatsoever. The accompaniment process can also help UNDEF to overcome its lack of information during project implementation, as it builds a permanent two-way communication process with the grantees.
18.		The lack of a structured follow-up to the projects after the conclusion of the project document phase – and in addition to the 'milestones' - misses opportunities for UNDEF to assist CSOs to overcome challenges related to implementation, amongst other issues.	UNDEF would benefit from creating a structured process for providing guidance to CSOs after the project development phase, with the aim of providing an additional strengthening and learning tool for the CSOs, rather than to audit the process.
19.		The two-year timeframe is insufficient to generate meaningful, sustainable results across the board. The two-year timeframe, furthermore, risks raising the expectations of stakeholders – expectations that cannot be met.	UNDEF should consider expanding the two-year timeframe to three or five years, or offer follow-up assistance on finding funding on the basis of evaluations to successful grantees, and/or provide the opportunity for CSOs to apply to the Advisory Board for bilateral 'sunset' funding.
20.	<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>	The evaluations, which come once the project has been completed, have no follow-up mechanism, and the findings do not therefore flow into projects, nor to supporting CSO skills or knowledge. As a consequence, the approach to evaluation is overly focused in timing, tone and substance on 'auditing' the CSOs over and above helping them learn, and integrate these lessons/insights into future iterations of the programme.	UNDEF should rethink its evaluation process as a strengthening process for CSOs, and question whether evaluations are the best way to achieve this objective. In this sense, a structured accompaniment process designed to give technical assistance and retrieve information from the projects could be more effective and evaluations can be conducted at country or thematic level, or other dimensions of UNDEF's intervention, where necessary. Details on how this could be done are provided in the recommendations section.
21.		Donors tend not to read individual project evaluations.	UNDEF would benefit from giving CSOs opportunities and channels to communicate with donors (and board members), and from finding ways to provide higher-level snapshots

			of impact to donors and board members over and above individual project evaluations. For example, by allowing grantees to write their own systematization and analysis of the projects with the guidance of the ‘accompaniment system,’ and distributing them to stakeholders and others.
22.		Some CSOs were not given the chance to review their evaluation before it went on-line and some were not made aware of their evaluation being on-line.	If UNDEF continues to implement evaluation at the project level, it should ensure that all grantees are given an opportunity to review the evaluation and play an intermediary role in cases where there is a broadly different appreciation of the facts, and the context. This approach would be enhanced by an evaluation modality that focuses on learning over and above accountability/audit.
23.		Grantees that are awarded a second grant without an evaluation have not always performed well; similarly, some grantees have performed extremely well and would have benefited from a second evaluation – which may have triggered a second round of funding, but did not have one.	UNDEF should ensure that information on project implementation, results and outcomes is available in some shape or form before the end of the projects to ensure that successful projects are given an opportunity to impact as many people as possible, and to ensure that UN funds are not given to an organization that may not have performed as well as believed.
24.		Given the wide range of contexts, themes and CSOs involved in UNDEF’s work, complex quantitative methods are not appropriate – nor insightful enough – to constitute a methodology for evaluating UNDEF projects.	A Result-Based Monitoring System based on qualitative analysis, with a follow-up with beneficiaries could provide useful information to provide insights on the work of the CSOs, and thereby the impact of the fund. validate the effort of the CSOs and thereby levels of impact of the fund.
25.	<b>Projects - general</b>	The vast richness and diversity of projects and contexts indicates that there can be no ‘one size fits all’ approach; however, CSOs would benefit from learning from one another’s experiences, and understanding for themselves how those experiences can be tailored to the context.	UNDEF can help create the conditions to enable CSOs to learn from one another in-country and between countries to allow for the richness of experiences to be shared, lessons learnt to be absorbed, and successful project models tailored to other country contexts.
26.		Projects tend to be successful when they are part of a broader strategy on the part of CSOs, and an expression of their vision. UNDEF’s insistence that it funds projects, not organizations, has not proven to be true across the board, - but with positive results.	UNDEF would benefit from being more flexible about the type of projects it funds, including those that fall in line with the CSOs ‘business as usual’, since this is another way to ensure capacity to undertake, and own the project.
27.		Successful projects adapt and change according to circumstance and context, and do not remain overly ‘wed’ to a project document in spite of changes on the ground. Projects have benefitted to a certain extent from UNDEF’s flexibility to changes in the project once implementation is underway. No cost extensions may be insufficient to meet changes in contexts, however.	UNDEF should remain flexible, extend its flexibility: CSOs would benefit from the option of deferring the project start date if the context has changed so dramatically that the project needs to be re-thought; UNDEF would also benefit from being more flexible with regards to budget allocations that often change over time.

28.		Many CSOs have produced a wealth of booklets, training programmes and guidance materials that would undoubtedly be of benefit to other UNDEF grantees, and CSOs more broadly.	UNDEF should facilitate the sharing of information and documentation amongst grantees and with CSOs more broadly.
29.		Projects can alienate beneficiaries if they are seen to impose 'external' norms and practice.	UNDEF can help CSOs to ensure their projects are anchored in internationally-recognised norms and standards, as well as cultural, religious and social practices of the country in question.
30.		Projects that are too 'capital-centric' risk excluding some of the most marginalised groups.	UNDEF should prioritise projects that focus on rural populations and/or making linkages between urban and rural populations, and/or marginalised populations living in difficult conditions, such as slums, for example.
31.		Projects that are too geographically ambitious risk undermining their own chances of success. Projects that chose to focus on a few communities as 'pilots' before expanding to other areas have a better chance of success.	UNDEF should encourage CSOs to be geographically modest in their projects, and to expand after trying out new approaches on a few communities before expanding further afield.
32.		Projects designed to empower a target group are more effective and successful when offering a combination of training, experiential learning and spaces of sharing and interaction among beneficiaries. While skills and knowledge are useful for channelling and structuring ideas, the existential experiences and interactions seem to be the real empowerment process, according to the perceptions of the	UNDEF could establish criteria to assure that empowerment projects contain the ingredients mentioned and/or advise CSOs in the guidance process to pay attention to them.
33.	<b>Community activism</b>	Trainer of trainer approaches have been particularly effective at enabling CSOs to reach broad and diverse populations; in one project, for example, one organization trained 50 CSOs and each of those CSOs trained over 200 grassroots organisations. This approach was enhanced by the main CSO remaining 'on call' for ad hoc mentoring and problem solving amongst the 200 grassroots organisations.	UNDEF can select projects and/or encourage CSOs to use trainer or trainer approaches in order to 'scale up' and broaden the impact of projects.
34.	<b>Rule of law and human rights</b>	Projects seeking to empower PWDs are effective when they combine efforts to empower PWDs, with efforts to sensitise and educate communities to combat stereotypes and misperceptions. The most successful projects also target high level officials and opinion leaders from the executive, legislative, judiciary and media.	UNDEF should encourage CSOs working on issues related to disability to combine efforts to empower PWDs, with efforts to overcome misperceptions and stereotypes in the communities where they live. Targeting of opinion leaders and senior officials should also be encouraged as and where this fits in line with the vision and mandate of the CSO.
35.	<b>Women's empowerment</b>	Gender projects that fail to also include men are unlikely to succeed at realising their objectives. CSOs working on gender must empower women and sensitive men to ensure both are fighting for women's rights. The "man to man" training approach used in one project was particularly effective.	UNDEF has a role to play in selecting projects and/or encouraging CSOs to ensure men are included in projects seeking to improve women's rights in a sensitive and culturally-appropriate manner.

36.		It can be difficult to empower women on their rights when some might be lacking basic skills in literacy – skills that can help them take appropriate action to ensure their rights are respected.	UNDEF has a role to play in selecting projects and/or encouraging CSO's to include basic literacy training for all stakeholders that require it.
37.	<b>Youth engagement</b>	Projects oriented towards youth (especially very 'young' youth) benefitted from engaging with parents to sensitive them to issues being covered in the engagement, and helping ensure their buy-in for the process.	UNDEF can encourage grantees to consider engaging with parents in projects involving 'young' youth, especially in high-risk contexts.
38.		Innovative ways of engaging with youth can help broaden engagement; projects, for example, that explore the use of music, film and arts can prove beneficial for engaging with youth.	UNDEF should continue to be supportive of innovative projects that explore new ways of engaging with youth and other marginalized groups.
39.		Trainings that involve both imparting skills and enabling participants to put those skills into practice are most effective at generating lasting results. These 'practical' elements also ensure that relationships are built between participants – relationships that tend to outlast the project.	UNDEF can play a role in ensuring that trainings are action-oriented, and that budgets include line items for ensuring participants can put skills learnt from training into practice.
40.	<b>Tools for knowledge</b>	Tools for knowledge are necessary but insufficient to creating sustainable changes. It should be noted, however, that only a small fraction of projects analysed by the evaluators fall into this category.	As per above findings, tools for knowledge should be accompanied by experiential learning processes, and platforms that create space and allow stakeholders to engage in dialogue. UNDEF can play a role in supporting projects in this category to be supported by other actions that foster participation.
41.	<b>Media and freedom of information</b>	Media projects that seek to raise the professional and ethical standards of journalism can play an important role in enhancing democracy. This has proven particularly effective when combined with efforts to decentralise and 'de-eliticise' the media by helping journalists to cover and be sensitive to non-urban based reporting.	UNDEF can encourage and/or select projects that combined media professionalization with efforts to foster greater urban-rural understanding and communication. Projects that seek to use the media to foster local-level dialogue between local government representatives and communities can also be effective.
42.		Many UNDEF projects would have been able to better achieve their mandate if they were partnered with media entities that share their goals, since many are dependent on communicating and/or lobbying/engaging in advocacy-related activities as an integral part of their projects.	UNDEF can consider selecting media-related projects in countries where other projects have been selected, and facilitating contact and collaboration between the two entities. UNDEF can also play a role by helping CSOs to develop a communications strategy.
43.	<b>Interaction with government</b>	Projects that include an element of interaction with the state and/or government tend to be more sustainable (in instances where that relationships lead to a level of trust); however, impact can still be achieved without it.	UNDEF should encourage CSOs to build some level of state/government interaction into their projects; successful projects help create a space of interaction with the public sector.
44.		Watchdog organisations that focus only on criticism are less likely to be effective than those that criticise <i>and</i> offer constructive solutions, or create avenues and/or platforms for discussions.	UNDEF should provide advise during the design of the project and during its implementation, in order to foster a constructive attitude in CSOs, while engaging with States.

## IX. Concluding thoughts from the evaluators

69. During the course of the visit to New York, one stakeholder exclaimed: **“UNDEF is an untold story of brilliance, I am sure it is full of hidden gems”**. The evaluators wholeheartedly agree. There is absolutely no question about the high value of UNDEF or the vital need for its existence – an extremely bold and rare conclusion in the experience of the evaluators. If UNDEF didn’t exist, the UN would lose a unique and trusted entity, its only entity actively enabling civil society to address challenges in the way *they* deem best. Indeed, it is the only UN entity giving life to a civil society-*led* agenda focused on bridging polarising differences that hinder progress, and ensuring the rights of the most marginalised populations are respected, their voices heard, and some of their most basic needs for dignity realised. This is the heart of what the UN represents to all those who believe fully in the ideals upon which it was founded.
70. **So far, UNDEF has created invaluable spaces for CSOs to foster democratic processes. Central to this evaluation is a range of ‘further opportunities’, that should chart the way forward.** These include the opportunity to: encourage innovation, and to support weaker, rather than ‘mid-level’ CSOs; foster collaboration amongst CSOs in-country, CSOs who are – in many cases – deeply suspicious of one another, or least fiercely competing for funds; guide CSOs through the complexities of project implementation, and to surmount the challenges of sustainability; use its extensive network of UN actors in the field to provide substantive guidance to grantees, creating a dialogue that would undoubtedly be mutually beneficial; foster learning amongst CSOs across countries and continents, CSOs who – despite socio-political and cultural differences – are too often tackling similar challenges and making the same mistakes; *know* UNDEF’s impact by sustaining relationships with grantees long after project closure; use its network of 600+ grantees as the UN system’s ‘ear on the ground’ with a view to fostering the prevention of conflict and human rights violations; serve as the UN System wide ‘bridge’ between civil society and Member States, by using its knowledge to inform both the GA and the Security Council about the state of civil society, and threats to peace, security and democracy emanating from those living this reality every day at the grassroots level; ‘show-case’ positive interactions between States and CSOs to the more dubious and fearful Member States; use both the PCG and Advisory Board to strategic ends i.e. to enhance the impact of work undertaken by civil society actors on the ground; and, to support the UN System as a whole to better achieve its own objectives.
71. The fact that UNDEF is yet to take up these ‘further opportunities’ can be explained by three perceptions on the part of the evaluators mentioned in other parts of this evaluation: UNDEF is not sufficiently aware of its medium and long-term impact; UNDEF is not investing sufficiently in the accompaniment and follow-up of the projects, during implementation and after their ending; and, UNDEF appears to shy away from, rather than embracing the unique yet complex position it holds in the UN System, and use the strength of its foundations to its advantage. **Knowledge of impact, combined with more strategic use of resources and its position in the UN System would provide UNDEF with the tools and time to focus on its pressing – and much more threatening – financial concerns.**
72. As it stands, these dynamics lead UNDEF to dedicate a great deal of time fulfilling its obligation to ensure financial oversight of the funds entrusted to it, to the detriment of other worthwhile activities under its mandate. **It has one of the most complex and time-**

**consuming systems of audit and control the evaluators have ever seen**<sup>38</sup>. For relatively small sums of money in the range of 100,000-300,000 dollars, UNDEF has a team of seven people whose goal is to ensure funds are disbursed in the manner and timeframe promised; UN colleagues are sent to verify milestone events to ensure grantees have fulfilled their stated commitments before more funds are released; and, UNDEF has spent considerable sums on evaluations whose primary purpose is not learning (since they come at the end of the process, and since there is no follow-up). For such a small sum, UNDEF is expending an inordinate amount of time, energy and money to prevent a misuse of funds; this is commendable, but is it really worth it? That tiny percentage of grantees who would use UN funds to unstated ends pales in comparison to those who will use every ounce of energy they possess to stretch every single dollar to meet the needs of as many people as possible. This risk-averse attitude comes at a huge expense; indeed, UNDEF's preoccupation with efficiency is to the detriment of its effectiveness. These scarce resources must be used to much more effective and meaningful ends. The issue is not, of course, whether UNDEF should have these processes in place, since this question is redundant given that the Secretariat demands it. The question is how to use each and every one of these processes – the guidance processes, the milestone events, the evaluation, UNDEF visits, UN partner interactions – in a way that strengthens CSOs and helps UNDEF better achieve its mandate, rather than predominantly using them for accountability purposes.

73. In response to these above assertions, UNDEF states that the statement of work soliciting in interest in the evaluation contract stated that: *“The objective of the evaluations is to undertake in-depth analyses of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF devise funding priorities and future project strategies. UNDEF uses the lessons-learned as knowledge product and recommendations in order to improve the grant management processes, most importantly the project design processes. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outcomes have been achieved. Finally evaluations will be shared with a large audience including UN partners, civil society, academic and general public to contribute to the knowledge management of the democracy support community.”* **The evaluators do not disagree that these are the TOR for Transtec evaluators; however, three key issues remain.** Having read many Transtec evaluations, the evaluators stand by the assertion that since the content focuses on outputs and products, rather than outcomes and impact, the learning aspect of the evaluation is greatly reduced. By focusing on what was produced and which activities were completed, the evaluation is inherently audit-oriented, not learning-oriented. Secondly, since the evaluation comes at the end of the process, does not include any reference to UNDEF's role in the project design and implementation, and since there is no follow-up mechanism after the evaluation – the evaluation in modality, and not just in form, remains predominantly accountability or ‘audit’ oriented. Thirdly, placing the evaluation on the UNDEF website does not constitute sharing the findings of the evaluation with UN partners, civil society, academic and the general public. UNDEF will need to find ways to analyse and extract findings from a wide range of evaluations, and to share them in a proactive way in order for this important objective to be realised.
74. To summarise: **After ten years of creating a robust, well-oiled machine, it is now time for UNDEF to tell its “story of brilliance” and put its “gems” to good use.** In the words

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<sup>38</sup> UNDEF states: “This has become even more necessary with requirements for increased vigilance following misuse of funds in Trust Funds elsewhere in the Secretariat, leading to Secretariat-wide audits of Trust Funds by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors.”



## X. Recommendations

These recommendations draw upon the findings of the report, and reflect the views of stakeholders, grantees, and the evaluators. Many of these recommendations can be implemented by *re-directing* resources rather than necessarily requiring *more* resources. However, if UNDEF is to have the impact and visibility many are requesting of it, then additional resources will be required. The evaluators estimate that these recommendations will require the Advisory Board to approve an increase in operational costs (depending on which recommendations are accepted, UNDEF will need to undertake a detailed costing).

### *UNDEF Governance and Management*

- 1. Conduct an internal reflection process (internal to UNDEF, and with key partners/collaborators) concerning UNDEF's objectives and tools:** The internal reflection process, which could be enhanced by the use of facilitator, should seek to answer the 'So what?' question i.e. what is UNDEF's reason for being? The end result of this process should include a robust Results (and Resources) Framework; a comprehensive theory of change; and a cost-benefit analysis of different courses of action. If necessary, UNDEF could consider developing two versions of the RRF and TOC: one for internal purposes and one for political ends.
- 2. Revise and reform engagements with, and modalities of, the Advisory Board:** The frequency of engagements should be increased and the substance of the meetings refined to be more substantively tied to: thematic issues related to challenges of democracy promotion; challenges UNDEF may be encountering with regards to project vetos; challenges CSOs may be facing with regard to restrictions and human rights violations (and more attention paid to facilitator roles that Member States may be able to play); linkages that can be made between individual Advisory Board members, projects goals and regional counterparts (e.g. ASEAN, AU, ECOWAS, etc.); and, for discussing potential bilateral funding for strong, "sun-setting" projects. Members will also be reminded to serve as Ambassadors for UNDEF, spreading news about its objectives and outcomes, inviting UNDEF to relevant events, and exploring potential new donors – as relevant.
- 3. Revise and reform engagements with, and modalities of, the PCG:** UNDEF and PCG members should consider adding a representative from the Human Rights Council. The frequency of engagements should be increased and the substance of meetings be refined to address: challenges emanating from the field, and how field-based counterparts can assist; thematic challenges and where concerted effort with the principal organs (GA, SC and ECOSOC) may serve the purposes of all Secretariat entities. UNDEF should also consider providing more than a few lines on each project (at least half a page) to allow for a more substantive engagement with the projects.
- 4. Identify opportunities for engagement with the GA, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, ECOSOC and the NGO Committee:** Using the knowledge management system for inputs (see below), UNDEF staff should identify opportunities and put in place the right mechanisms to ensure regular engagement with all the above bodies. This will require developing both monthly and annual briefings on the state of civil society, government restrictions and democracy, at both a regional and country level. In this vain, UNDEF will explore the modalities for assisting CSOs to gain NGO consultative status.

### ***Project selection, guidance and modalities***

- 5. Adapt the selection process to ensure weaker CSOs with innovative ideas are rewarded:** The ten criteria for selecting projects should be “re-weighted” to ensure less importance is given to track record and presentation, and greater attention paid to impact and “innovation” – which should be added. International CSOs should not be considered for UNDEF projects, and CSOs should be requested to state how many international donors they have already worked with: those that have worked with more than 3 should not be given priority.
- 6. Extend project timelines from two years to four with a mid-term evaluation:** Concept note and project documents should be developed with a four-year time horizon in mind, and with a ‘Phase I’ and ‘Phase II’ approach. Phase one should be focused on engaging directly with beneficiaries, and phase two should be focused on trying to shift impact from the direct beneficiaries to the community, national or regional level (as appropriate). Learning and action-oriented evaluative processes will be conducted in the middle of the project with a view to actively informing – from a technical perspective – the second phase of the project. The project extension does not require a dramatic increase in funds; projects should be in the range of \$100,000-400,000.
- 7. Revise the templates for concept notes and project documents to enhance coherence and effectiveness:** The templates should be revised to ensure that CSOs i) identify other democracy promotion actors working in-country, on which issues, with whom and to what effect to avoid duplication; ii) identify regional treaties, policies and processes related to their project document in order to better anchor the project in regional frameworks. iii) They identify at least one ‘in-capital’ partner, and at least one or two out-of-the-capital partners to work with to implement projects.
- 8. Outsource the guidance process to a CSO (as a ‘project’):** This CSO will be charged with professionalising the already relatively well-developed process UNDEF uses for assisting grantees to transform their concept notes into project documents. The programme should consist of two phases: Phase I will be for CSO’s who are ‘rejected’ during screening to them develop basic skills in concept note writing; the modalities for this will need to be defined, but it could be a combination of an on-line programme and ad hoc mentoring. Phase II will be for all those grantees that made the ‘short list’ and should form a modular, professionalized version of the mentoring and support provided by UNDEF - also a combination of on-line resources and one-on-one mentoring. It should also include developing knowledge products for all CSOs, not only those applying for UNDEF grants (handbooks/guides, online training materials etc.).
- 9. Develop a guidance process related to project implementation and management:** Using the time freed up thanks to the above, UNDEF staff should focus on developing a similar guidance process used currently for project document development but tailored to project implementation/management. Based on their knowledge and understanding of the challenges encountered by CSOs during this phase, what kind of support is required? The guidance process should include: effective and inclusive stakeholder motivation; youth and gender issues; programming for conflict-sensitivity; effective and transparent financial management; M&E; using project management tools such as a GANTT chart; communication and advocacy; networking and building coalitions; leadership and building teams; and, addressing issues related to sustainability such as fundraising and outreach, amongst others (TBD)

- 10. Integrate CSO support into the budget awarded:** As a supplement to the budget awarded for project implementation, CSOs should be able to access four levels of additional support if this can be justified: i) up to 10% additional support for material purposes (computers, printers, vehicles, etc.); up to 10% additional support for capacity building/training for the grantee (to be identified following the mid-term evaluation); iii) up to 10% for the grantee to train weaker (ideally non-capital based) CSOs in the Phase I and Phase II of the technical guidance process using the materials developed (see Recommendation 9); the capacity of the CSO to undertake such a process will be determined during the mid-term evaluation; and, iv) up to 10% additional support to mentor another CSO in another country who would like to implement a similar project to the one undertaken by the grantee, to be determined at the end of the project.

### ***Knowledge management***

- 11. Develop a comprehensive knowledge-management system:** The knowledge management system is designed to facilitate information flows amongst grantees, and from grantees to UNDEF, and from UNDEF to the UN System. Using the same level of funding currently awarded to Transtec, the system will consist of five facilitator-experts working in each geographical region. The facilitators will be responsible for:
- Initial project selection (taking over the work of the current consultants) – to be supported by an assistant in light of expected increase in applications.
  - Working with grantees during the implementation phase and alongside UNDEF in developing a guidance process for implementation;
  - Undertaking the mid-term (between the two phases) “evaluations”, which are more centred on extracting lessons learnt relevant to the second phase of implementation.
  - Facilitating regular contact between in-country grantees, past and present.
  - Facilitating quarterly thematic discussions (on-line and via phone) amongst grantees from all regions, who can present their work and engage in Q&A.
  - Engaging in regular conversation amongst all five facilitators to identify opportunities for collaboration.
  - Provide assistance to grantees in case of crisis due to the context or consequences of grantee actions;
  - Mentor grantees who require more assistance, and encourage the exchange of best practices by facilitating dialogue and the identification of areas for cooperation (in-country, cross-country and between regions).
  - Provide both *ad hoc* (when required) and monthly updates to UNDEF regarding important issues related to the projects, concerns around violations and contextual changes as indicated by grantees, and best practices emerging from the field.
  - Follow up on results, effects and outcomes and identifying best practices maintaining communication before and after the project closure.
- 12. Create an annual competition and conference for UNDEF grantees:** Every year UNDEF grantees will be requested to submit entries to a competition for the ‘most innovative and impactful projects’ (themes could also be suggested). The top ten entries will be invited to a conference held in New York where they are able to present their projects to the Advisory Board, the PCG, Member States and others. Two grantees selected from the ten will also be given UN Consultative Status (to be agreed upon in consultation with the NGO Committee). These ten projects will also be eligible to receive further support from Advisory Board members to continue their projects in-country, or to mentor CSOs in other countries to conduct similar projects. The process

should be open to all grantees, irrespective of the year in order to foster understanding of long-term impacts of projects. All entries will be published and will contribute to the knowledge management process and the socialization of information about CSOs and projects among stakeholders.

- 13. Develop thematic publications and partnerships with academia:** UNDEF should sign agreements with key academic institutions and open up as much of its data-base as possible. As part of the agreements, academic institutions will be requested to produce bi-annual thematic publications on issues relation to civil society and democracy support. Some of the publications will substitute thematic evaluations, and focus on assessing project outcomes in key activities areas and based on the information produced by the knowledge management system.

### *Fundraising, Outreach and visibility*

- 14. Identify (and appoint) a Special Envoy or SRSG for enhancing the inclusiveness of democratization processes:** The Special Envoy or Special Representative can be either a well-respective figure and/or a celebrity, or a senior UN person vested with the responsibility of raising civil society-related issues, like other ASGs or USGs within the UN System (such as the Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, or International Migration, for example). They will be charged with raising the profile of UNDEF's work; working with the Executive Head to engage with the principal organs; and, visiting countries to raise awareness about the work of CSOs.
- 15. Develop a multi-faceted fundraising strategy:** A comprehensive fundraising strategy should be developed by UNDEF, including the development of a process similar to that of DPA's 'Multi-Year Appeal'. However, the process for writing both the appeal and the report should be outsourced to a consultant.
- 16. Develop a multi-faceted communications strategy:** UNDEF request permission from the Advisory Board to hire a new staff member responsible for the communications strategy. The communications strategy will include how to combine elements of the knowledge-management system with engagements with the Advisory Board, the PCG, the EOSG, DPI, the CSO competition, the fundraising strategy and, of course, engagements of both the Executive Head and the Special Envoy.

### *Additional issues*

- 17. Address the below minor issues to improve overall performance:**
  - Explore the feasibility of grantees submitting proposals in Spanish.
  - Consider increasing support to middle-income countries in order to counterbalance the decrease in international funding available to CSOs.
  - Consider making revisions to the activity areas, in line with the suggestions in this report: see page 13).
  - Enhance the distribution of the call for proposals by requesting support from Governments as appropriate, by identifying CSO networks and media outlets; support from UNDP should be requested in this regard.
  - Clean up the data-base by ensuring that all documents are correctly uploaded, and that gaps are addressed.
  - Provide grantees with the opportunity to revise the project and the budget one month prior to project implementation in order to ensure alignment with context.

- UNDEF staff should meet once a month for at least half a day to exchange insights on working methods and challenges identified/how challenges are overcome, etc.
- Request the CSOs under no circumstances outsource either the concept note or project document development processes to consultants.
- Revise mid-term report and end of year templates currently used for grantees away from an ‘audit’ approach towards a ‘learning’ approach that seeks to identify challenges, how these were overcome, what the grantee might have done differently, etc – rather than simply measuring whether the grantee did what it promised.
- Simplify the budget process by choosing whether CSOs have to submit a budget by line *or* by activity, but avoid requesting them to do both.
- Create opportunities for all UNDEF staff to interact formally and informally with Advisory Board members and PCG members.

## **Annex 1. Interview Instruments**

### **Questionnaire Framework New York Stakeholders**

1. What has been your experience of interacting with and/or working with UNDEF to date?
2. Given your knowledge of UNDEF, how would you articulate the theory of change underlying their work?
3. What are UNDEF's major strengths?
4. What are UNDEF's major weaknesses?
5. In your opinion, what UNDEF should do different?
6. In your opinion, what is the comparative advantage of UNDEF compared to other actors working in this domain such as the Open Society Foundation or the National Endowment for Democracy, for example?
7. To what extent (and/or to your knowledge) does UNDEF work with other actors across the UN system? How would UNDEF's mandate benefit from working more closely with UN actors? (Please specify which ones and how).
8. To what extent (and/or to your knowledge) does UNDEF work with other actors outside of the UN systems? How would UNDEF's mandate benefit from working more closely with non-UN actors? (Please specify which ones and how).
9. What do you think are the most pressing challenges facing civil society actors in the countries with which you are familiar and/or work most closely?
10. What do you think are the most pressing challenges facing democracy in the countries with which you are familiar and/or work most closely?
11. What recommendations would you make to UNDEF in order to better address these challenges?
12. Any further comments/thoughts?

**UNDEF Evaluation  
Questions for Grantees, Beneficiaries and other Stakeholders**

**A. Impact/meaning for grantees**

1. How would you describe your relationship with UNDEF? Why? What was important about this relationship/interaction?
2. What did you learn as a result of your engagement with UNDEF?
3. To what extent was the guidance process – developing the project document and any guidance provided during project implementation, for example – useful to you?
4. Do you still use the skills provided by UNDEF? How?
5. To what extent did you/do you still apply what you learnt from UNDEF when designing projects? Can you give any specific examples?
6. To what extent did UNDEF support assist with:
  - a. Building credible/visibility partnerships in-country (local and international)?
  - b. Improving the reputation of your CSO?
  - c. Securing additional funding from other entities for your CSO?
  - d. Any other benefits?
7. Were there any negative impacts/dynamics that occurred as a result of your engagement with civil society?
8. What happened at the end of the project? Did it continue in any form? What impacts did this have (if continued or discontinued)?
9. Do you think that other CSOs could benefit from UNDEF's support? In what way?
10. Do you believe that the state of civil society is improving or deteriorating in your country? Why?
11. Do you believe the state of democracy is improving or deteriorating in your country? Why?
12. Is there anything you would like us to convey to UNDEF on your behalf?

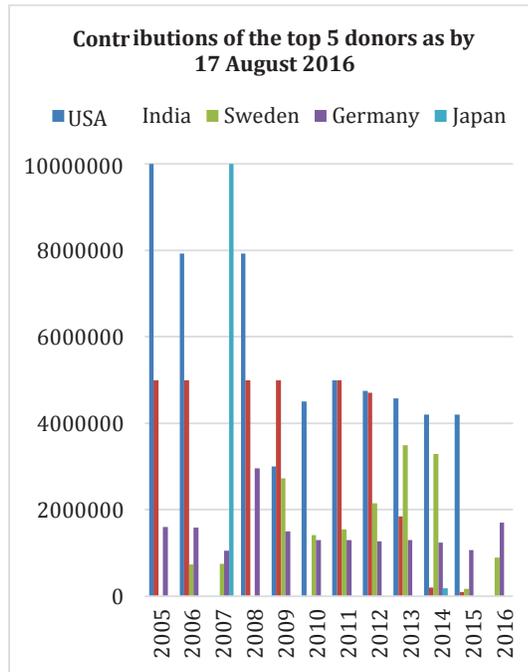
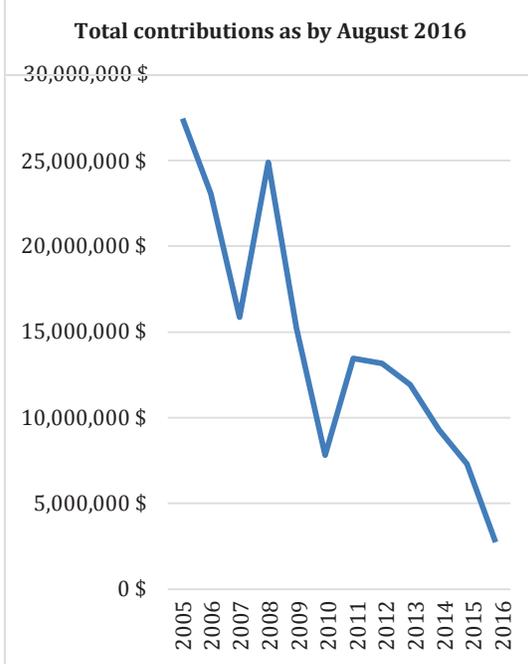
**B. Impact/meaning for beneficiaries (and context)**

1. In what way(s) did the project impact upon your life?
2. In what way(s) did the project impact the lives of others?
3. Was the project meaningful for your community/region/country? In what way?

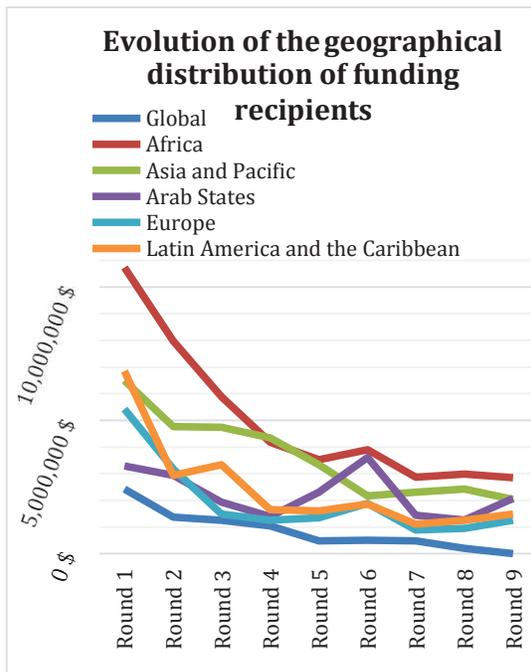
4. Did the project bring about changes in your community/region/country? Why?
5. In your opinion, what were the strengths of the project?
6. In your opinion, what were the weaknesses of the project?
7. How would you have designed the project differently if you had been leading it?
8. Does the project continue in any form? If yes, what form? If no, what impact did the closure of the project have on you and your community?
9. What impact will the skills, knowledge, relationships etc. that were accrued during the course of the project have on you and your community moving forward?
10. How would you define democracy?
11. What role does civil society play in fostering democracy?
12. Is there anything you would like to convey to UNDEF on your behalf?

## Annex 2. Quantitative data from surveys

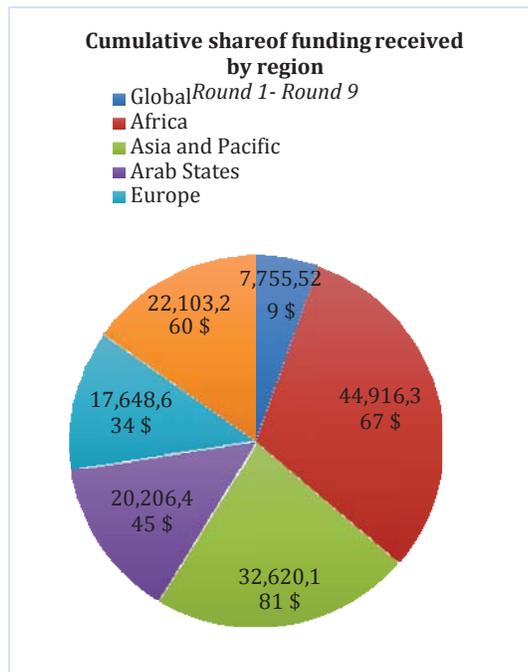
### General funding trends



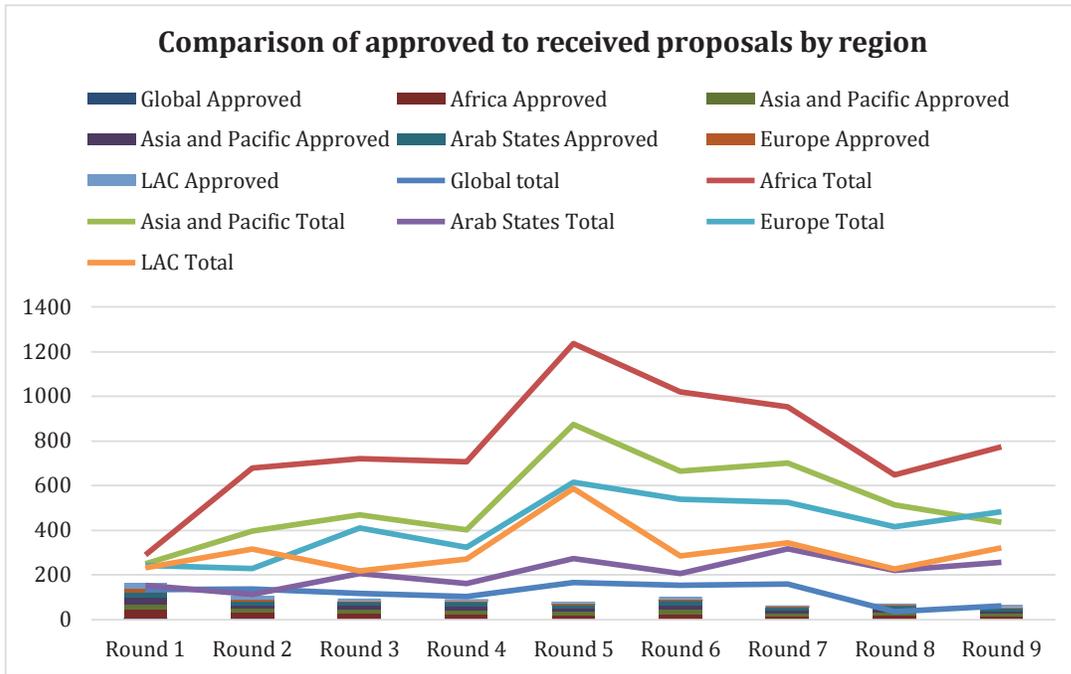
Source : Status of Contributions By Cumulative Amount as at 17 August 2016, UNDEF (2016)



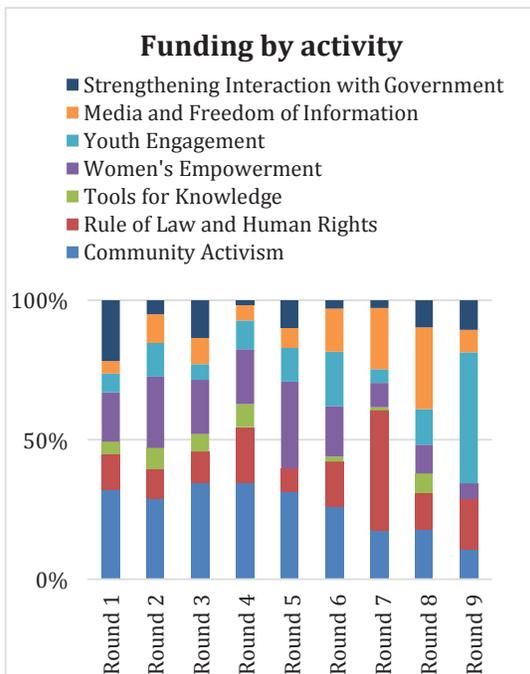
Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)



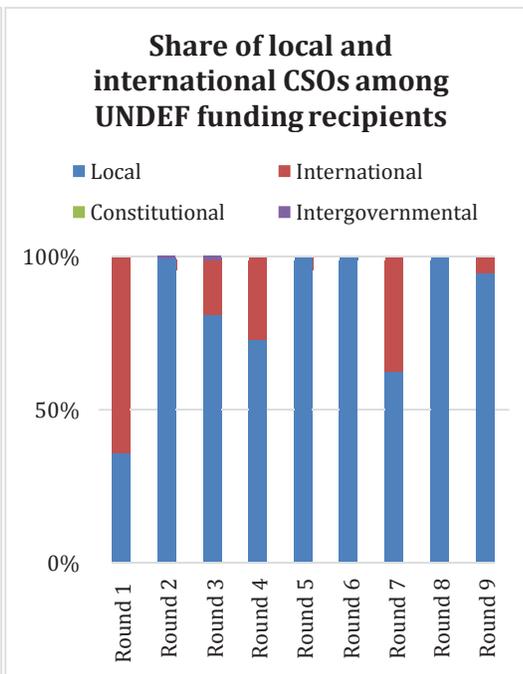
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Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)



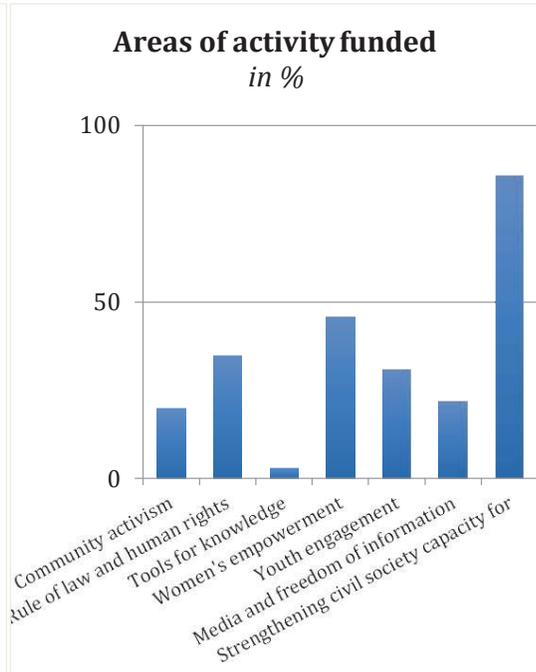
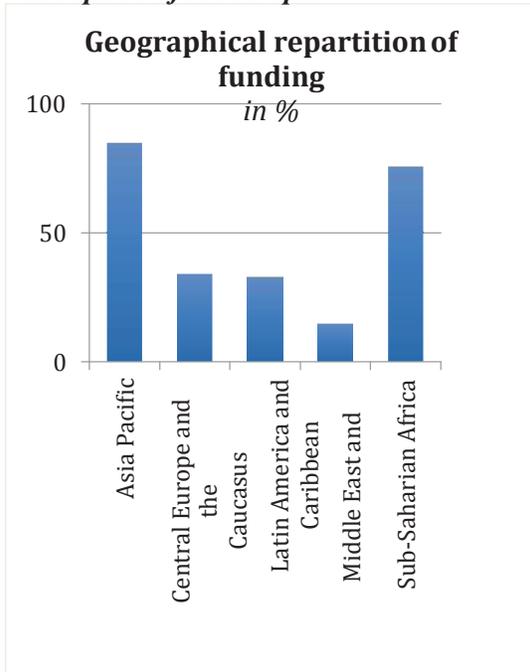
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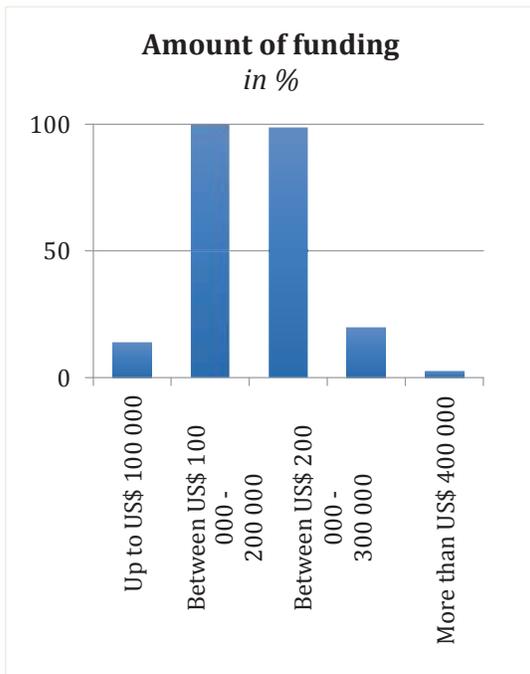
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**Description of the sample**



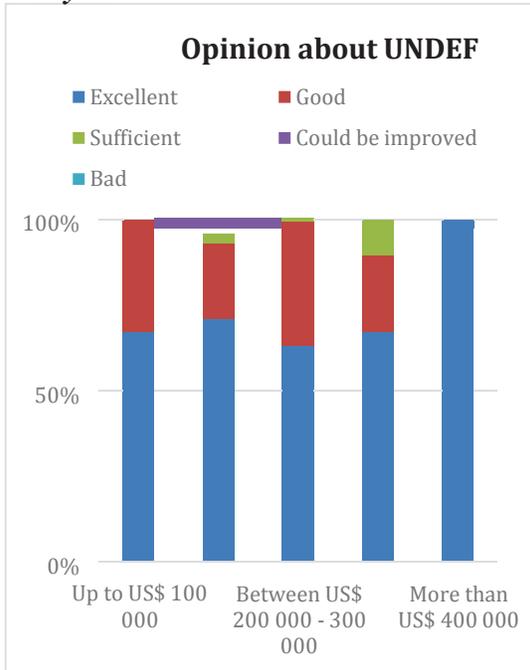
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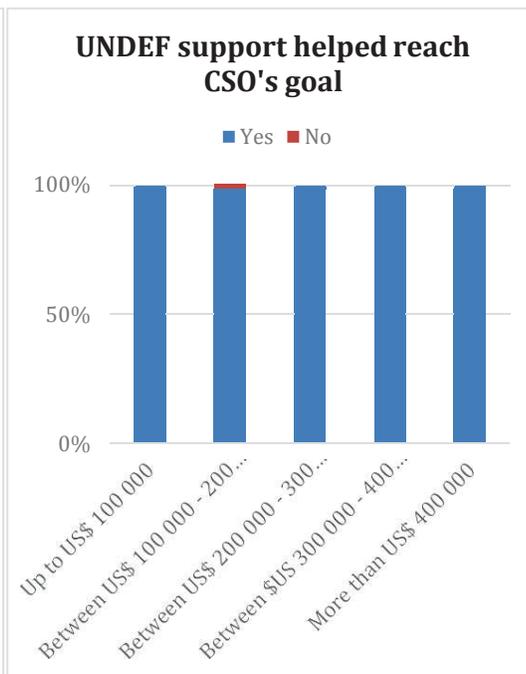
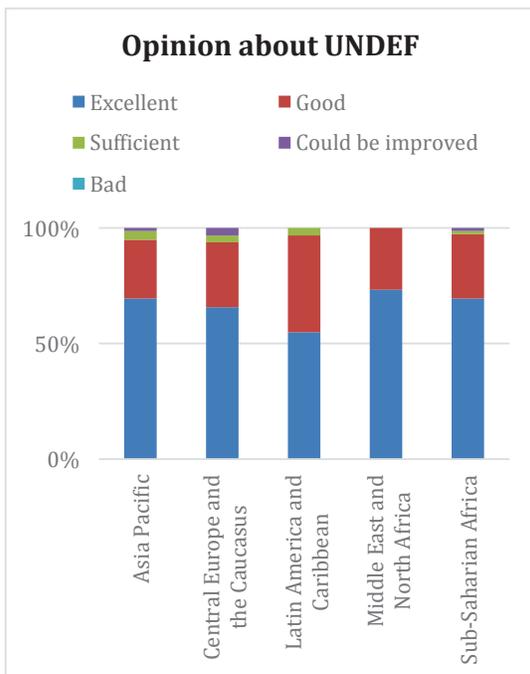


Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)

**Analysis**



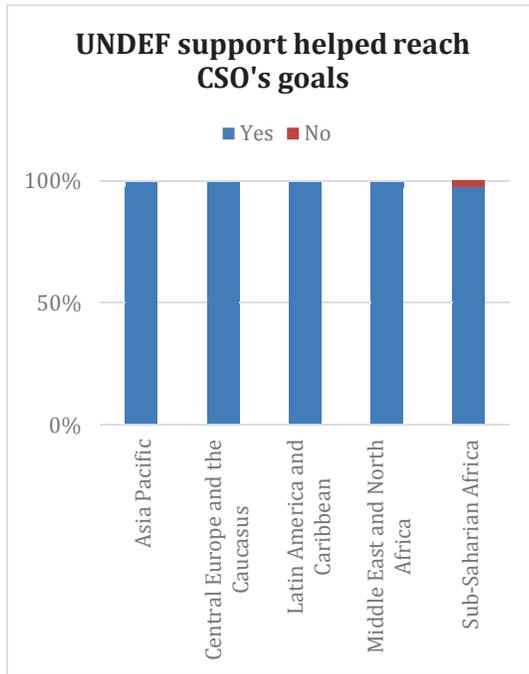
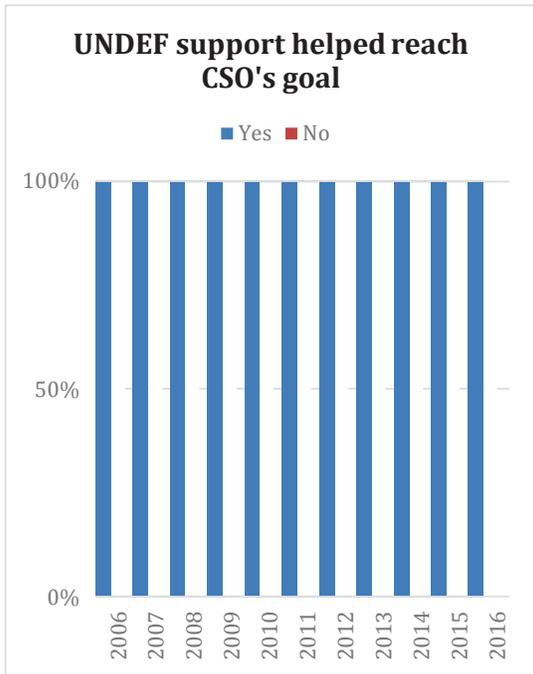
Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016) Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)



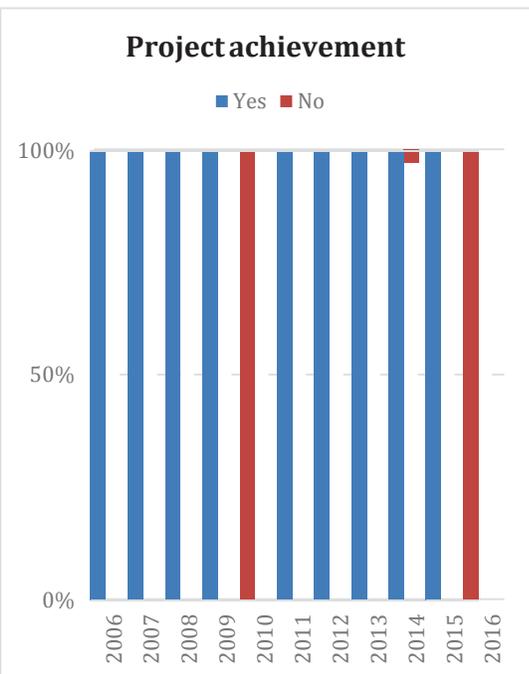
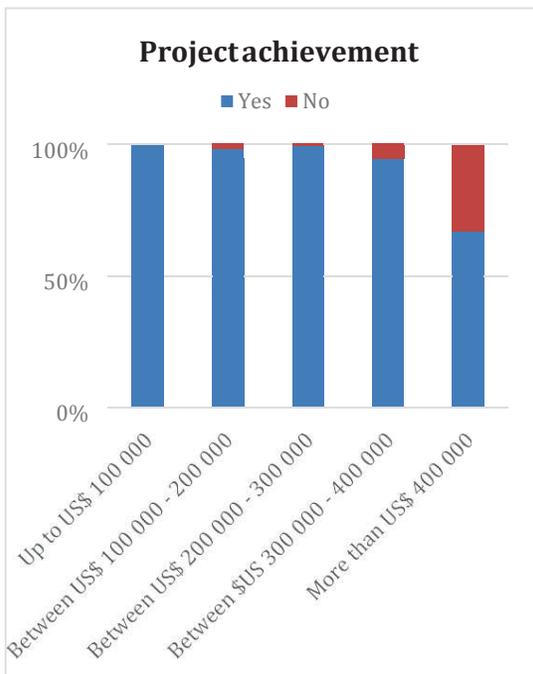
UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June case s16)

Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)

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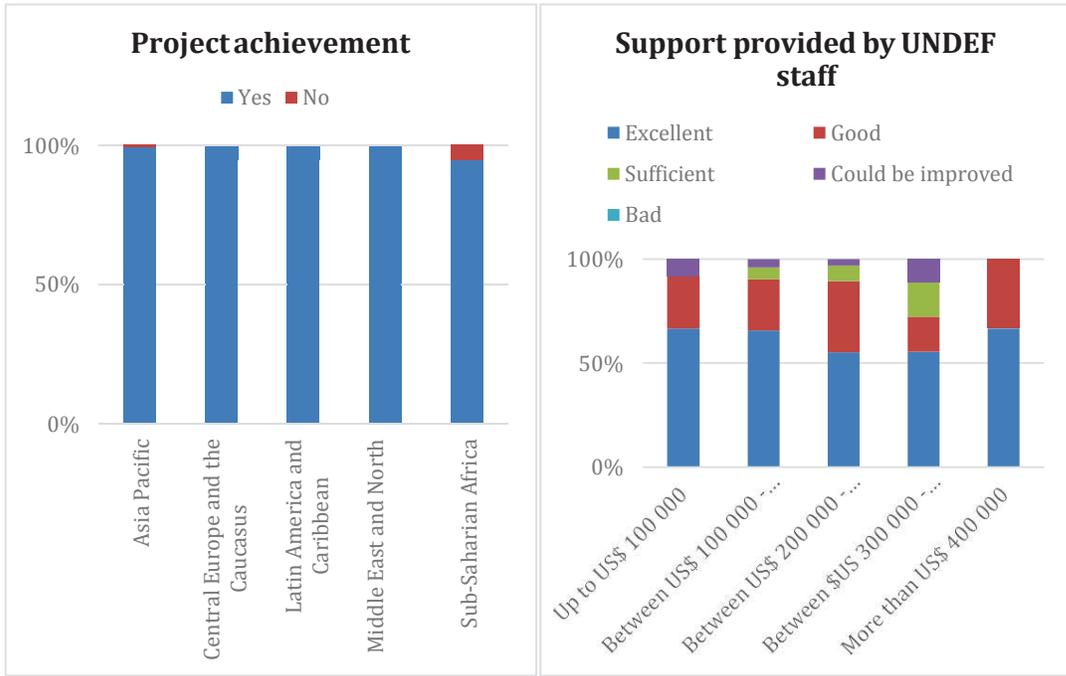
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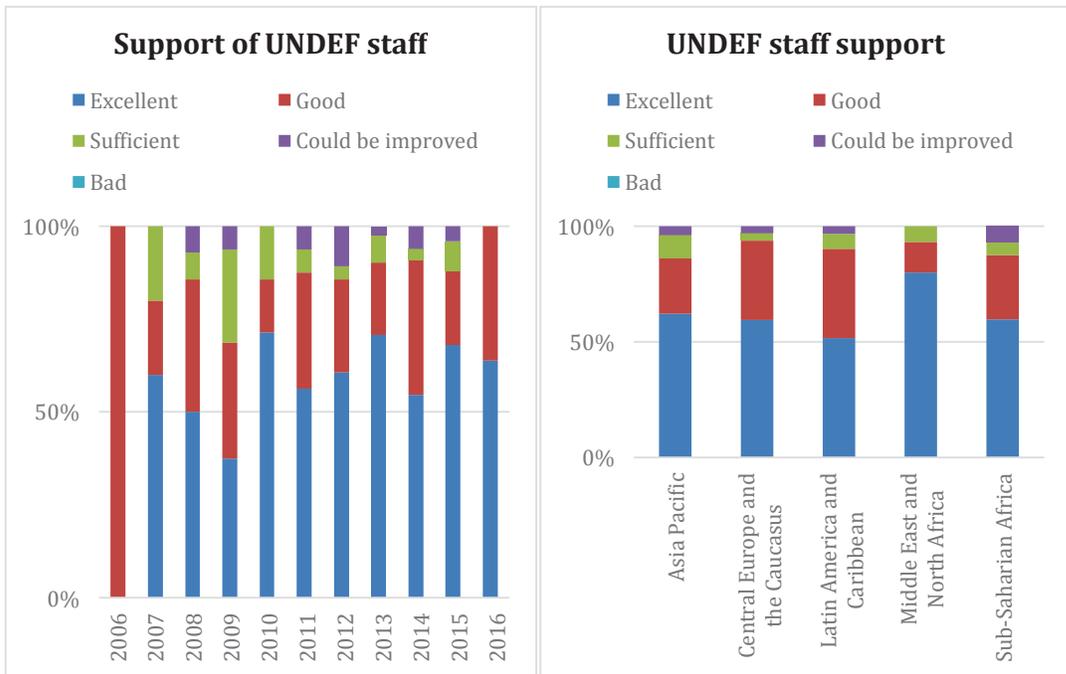
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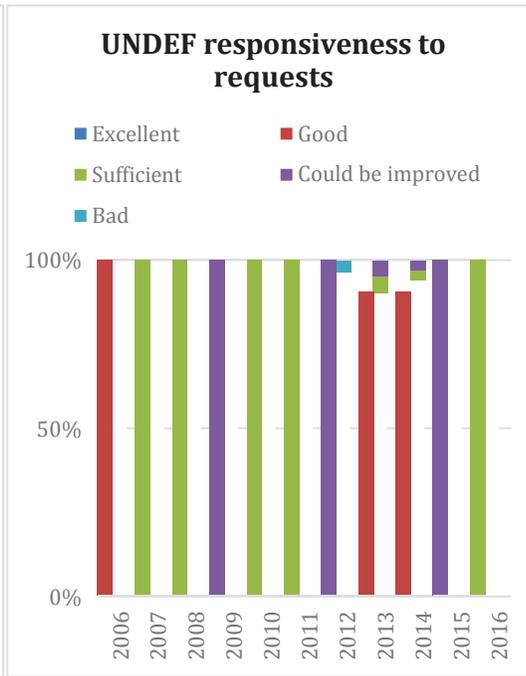
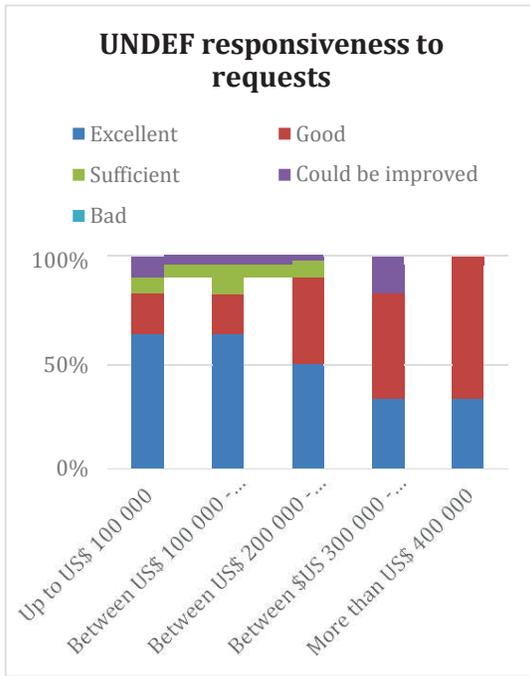
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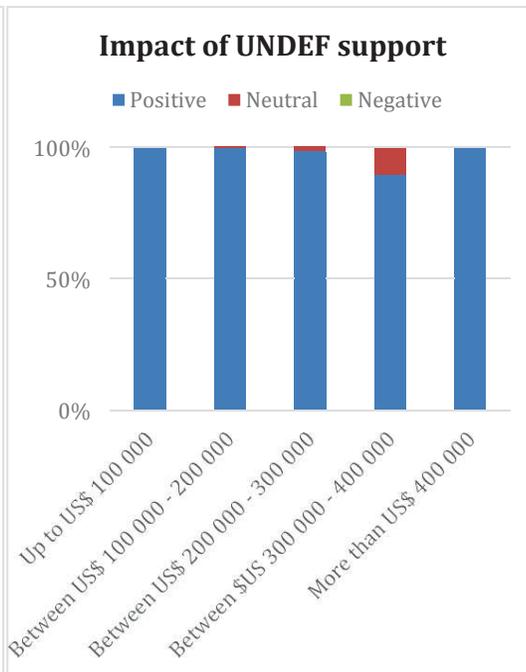
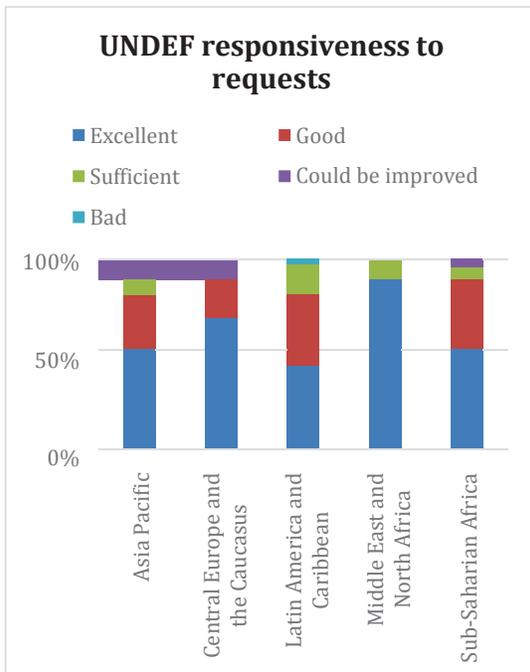
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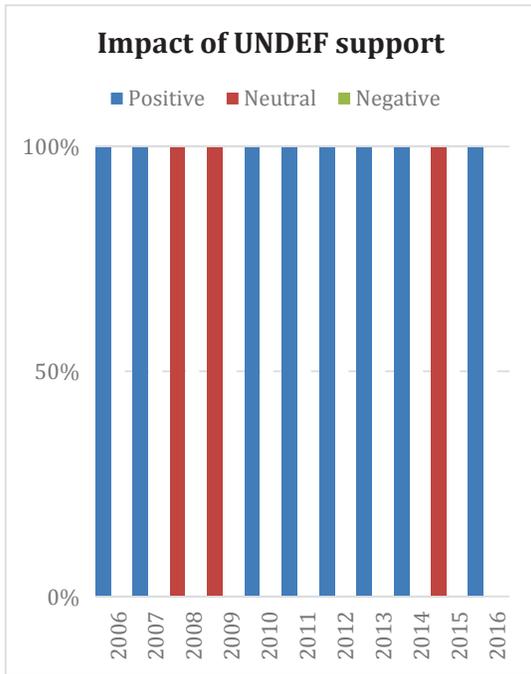
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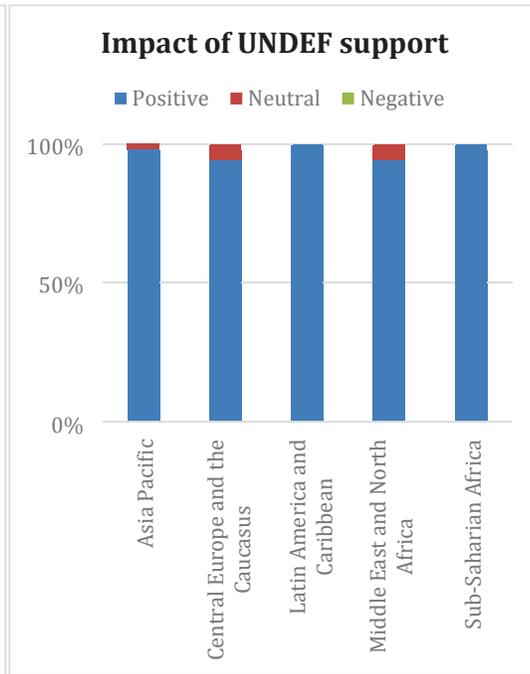
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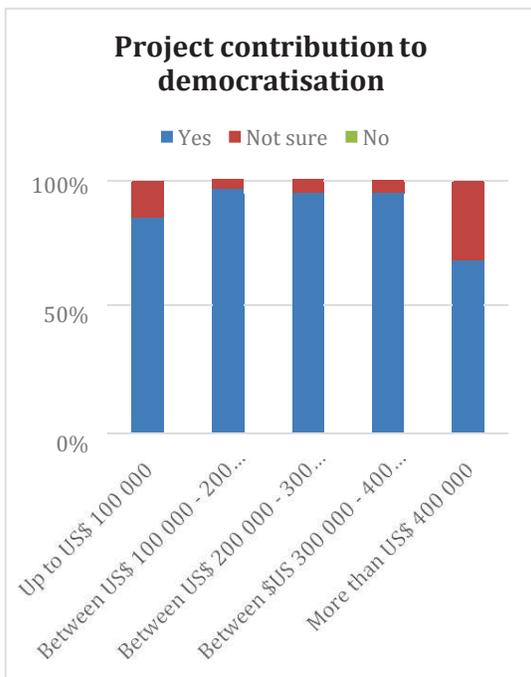


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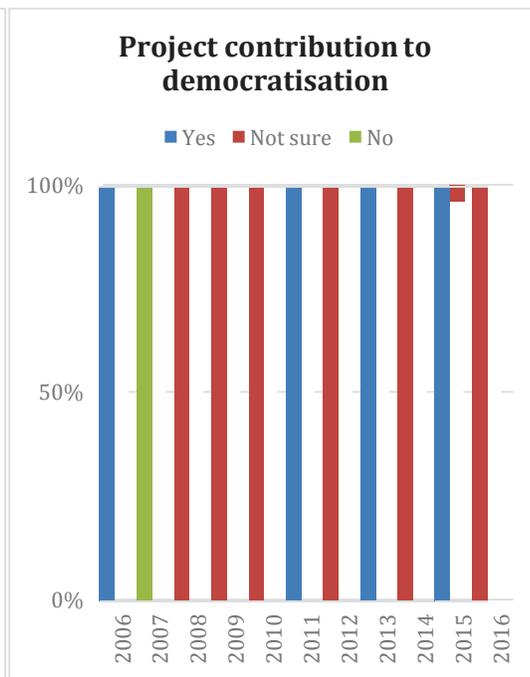


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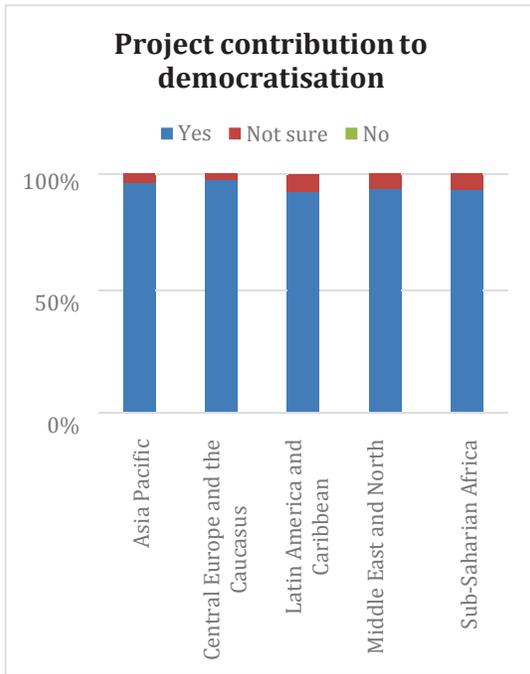


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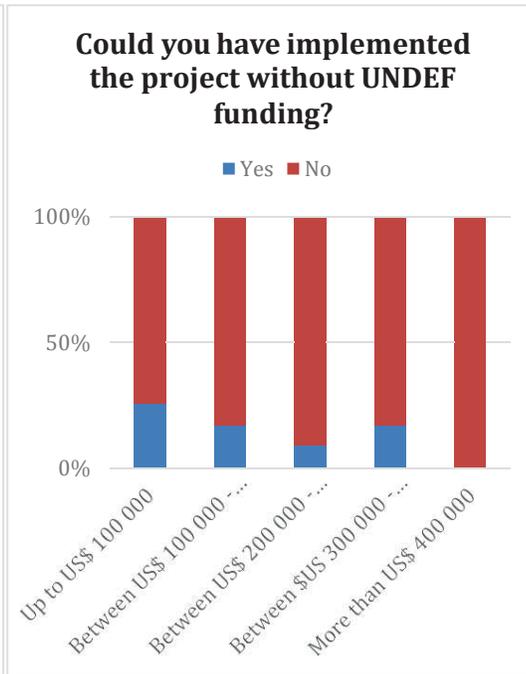


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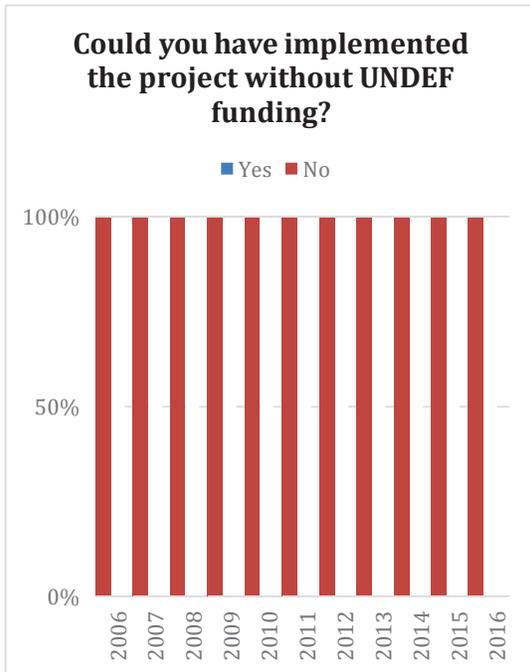


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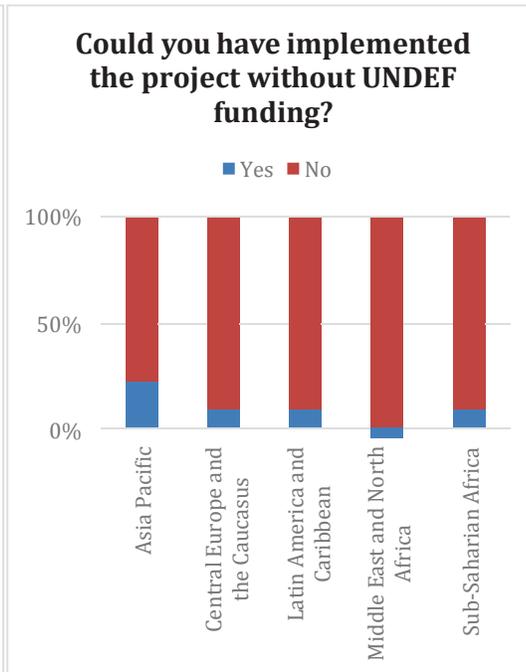


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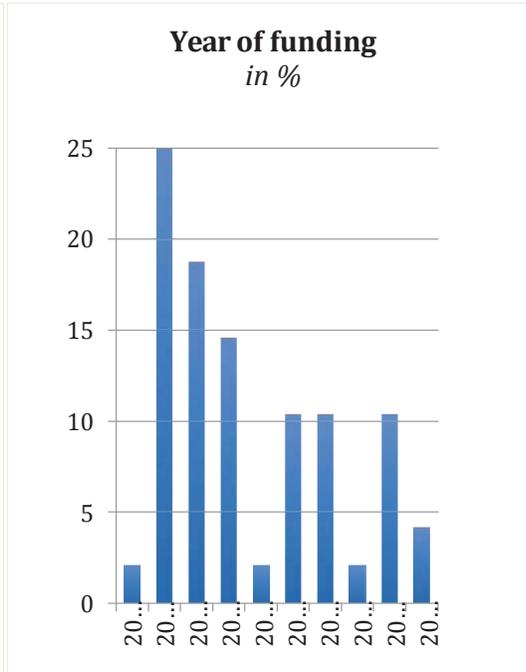
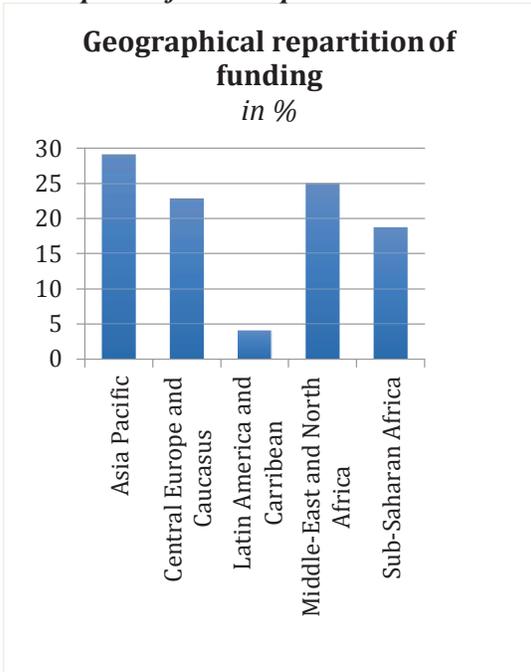


Source: UNDEF Evaluation 2016 (June 2016)

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**UNDEF Evaluation 100 CSOs, June 2016**

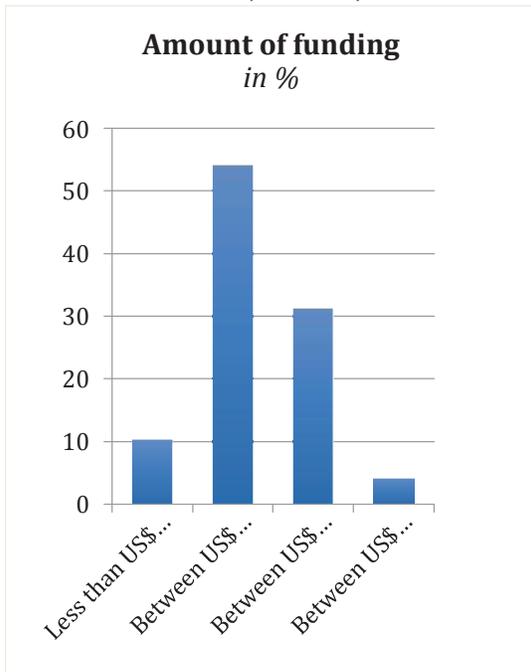
*Description of the sample*



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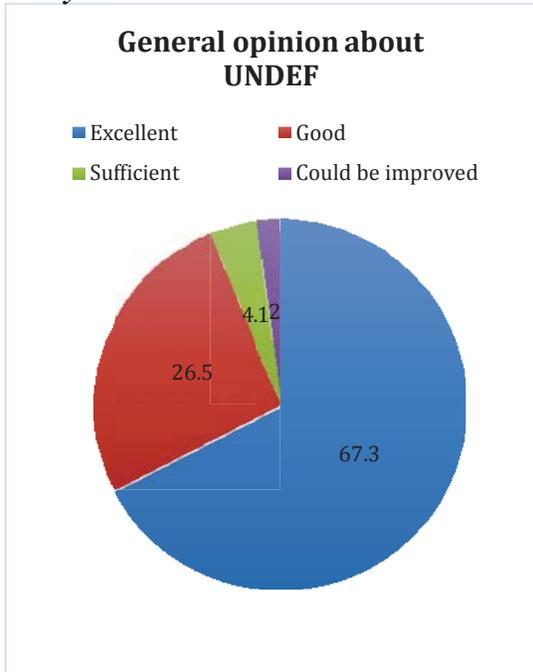
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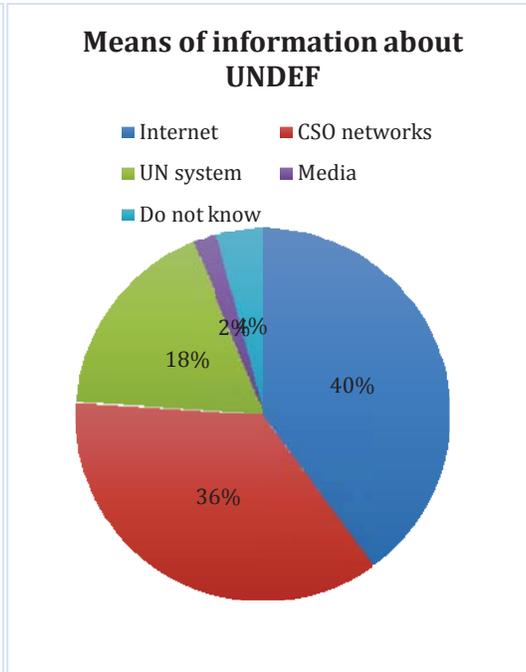


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**Analysis**

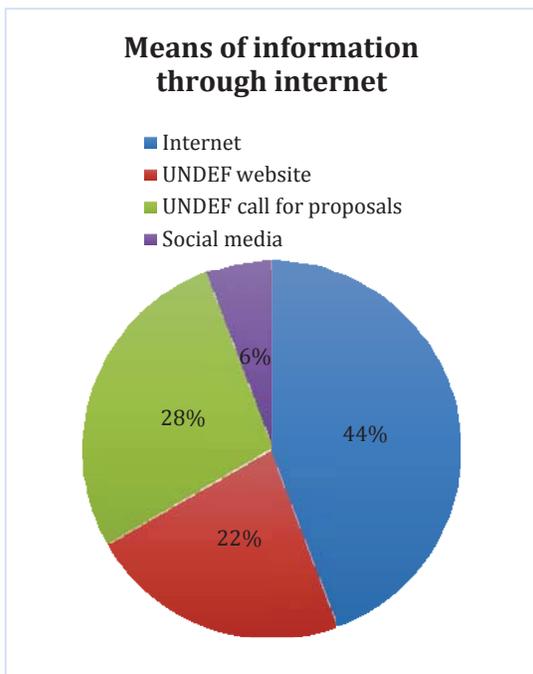


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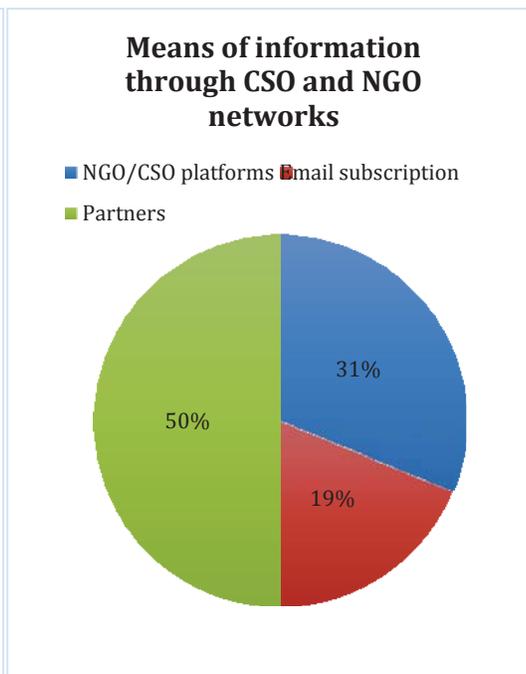


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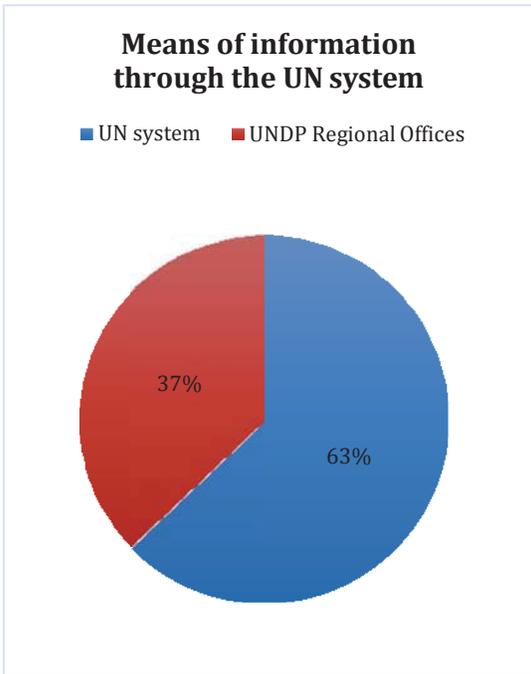


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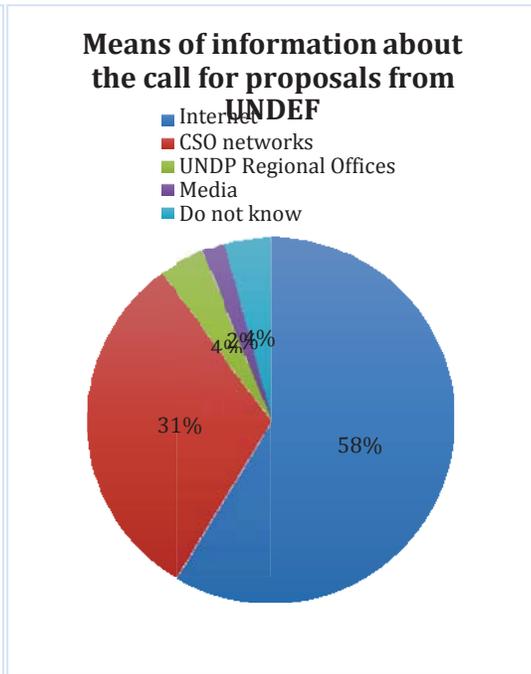


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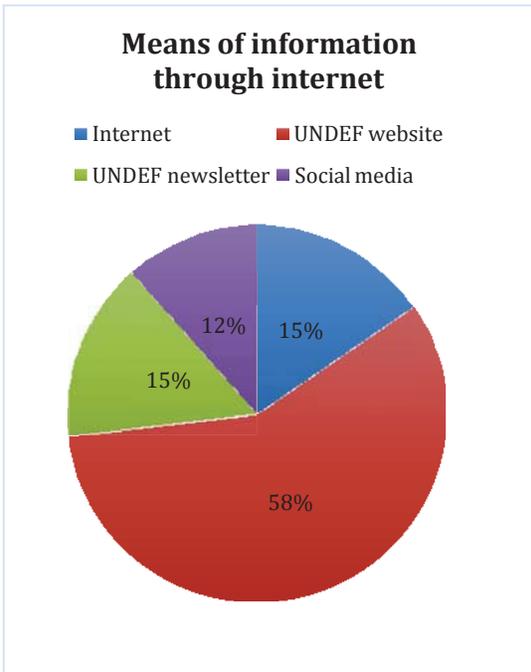


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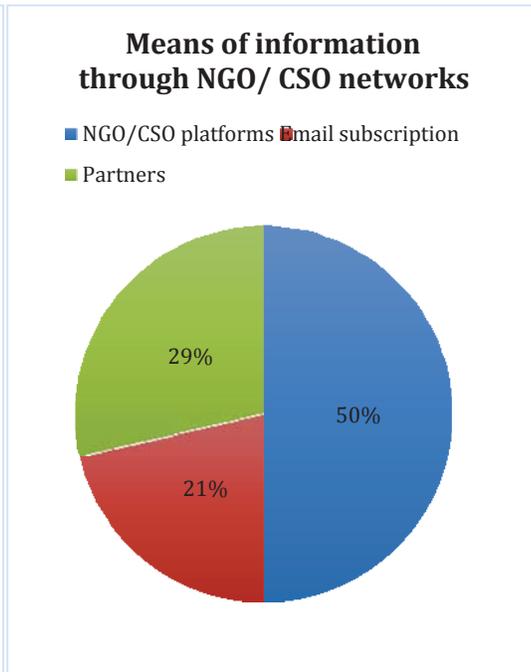


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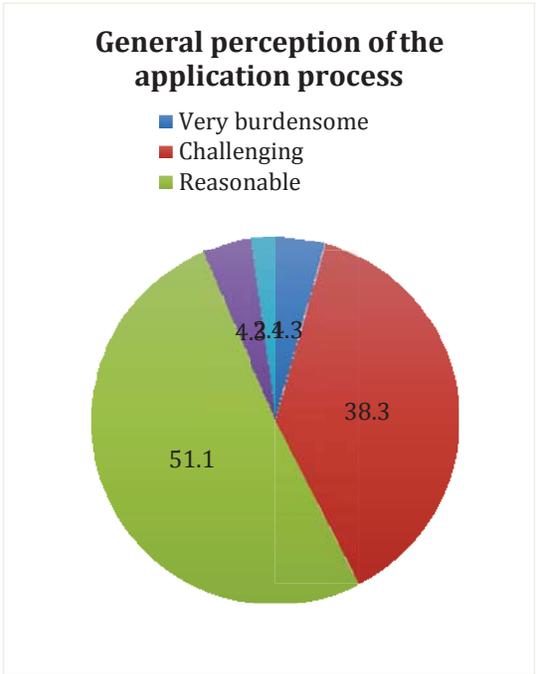


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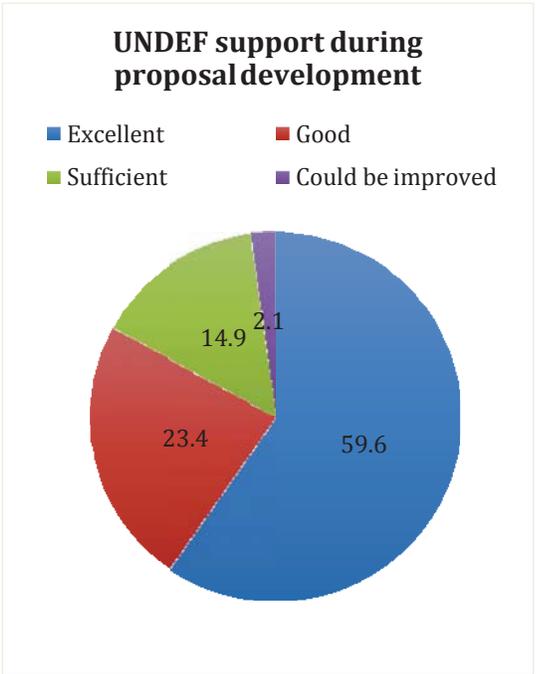


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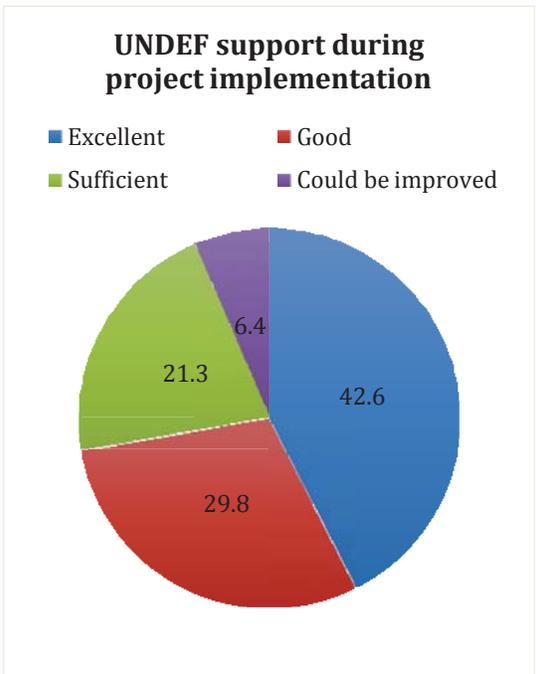


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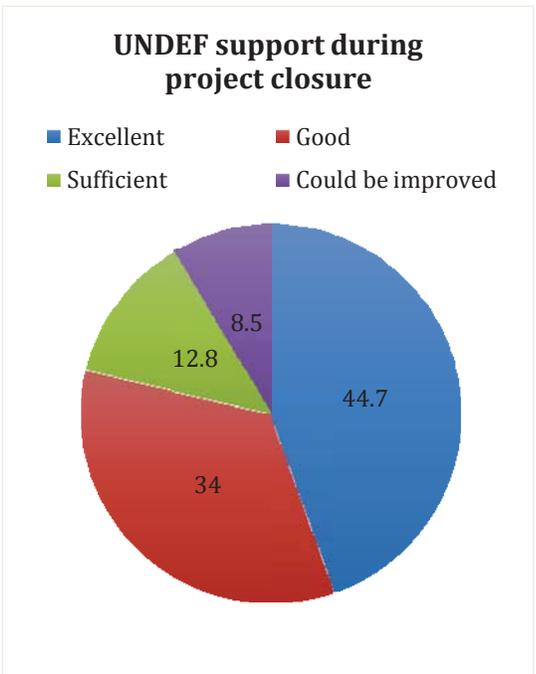


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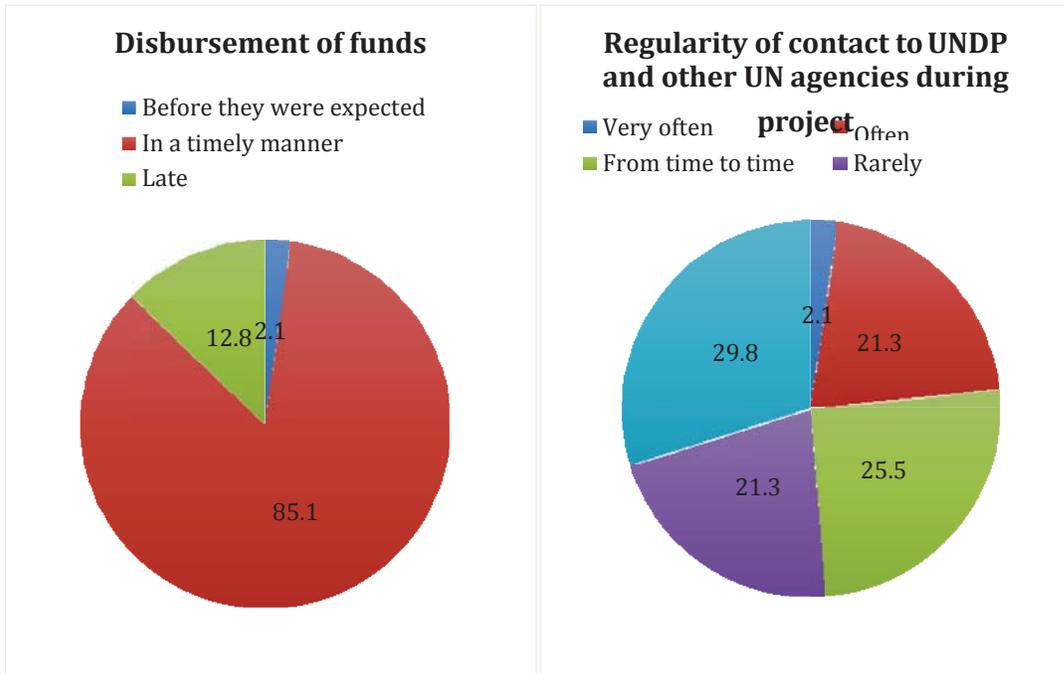


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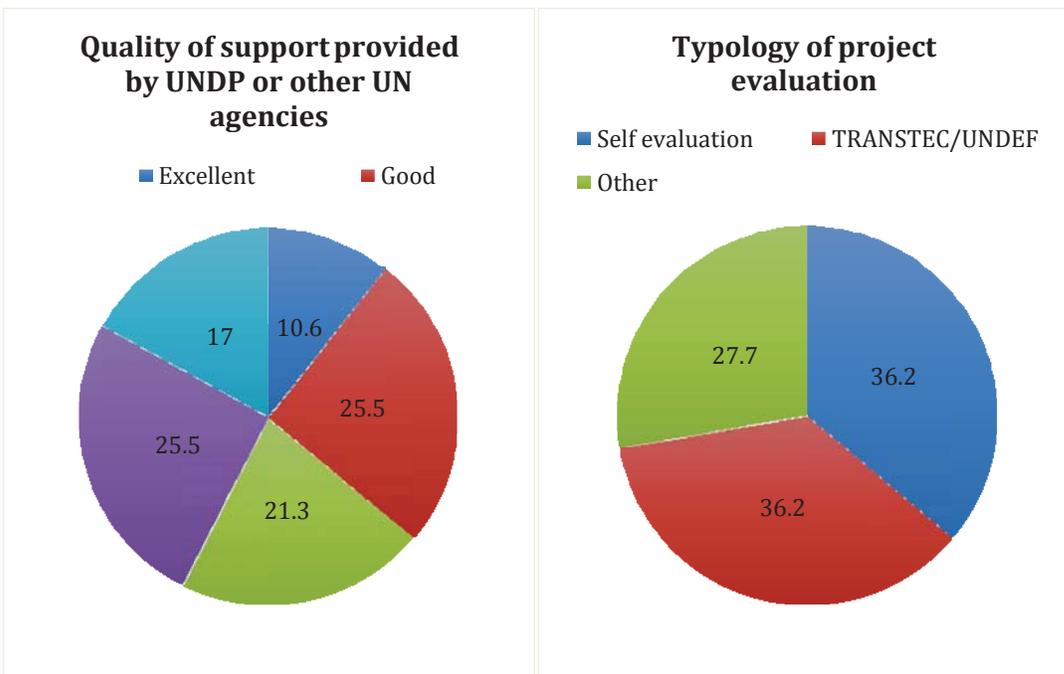


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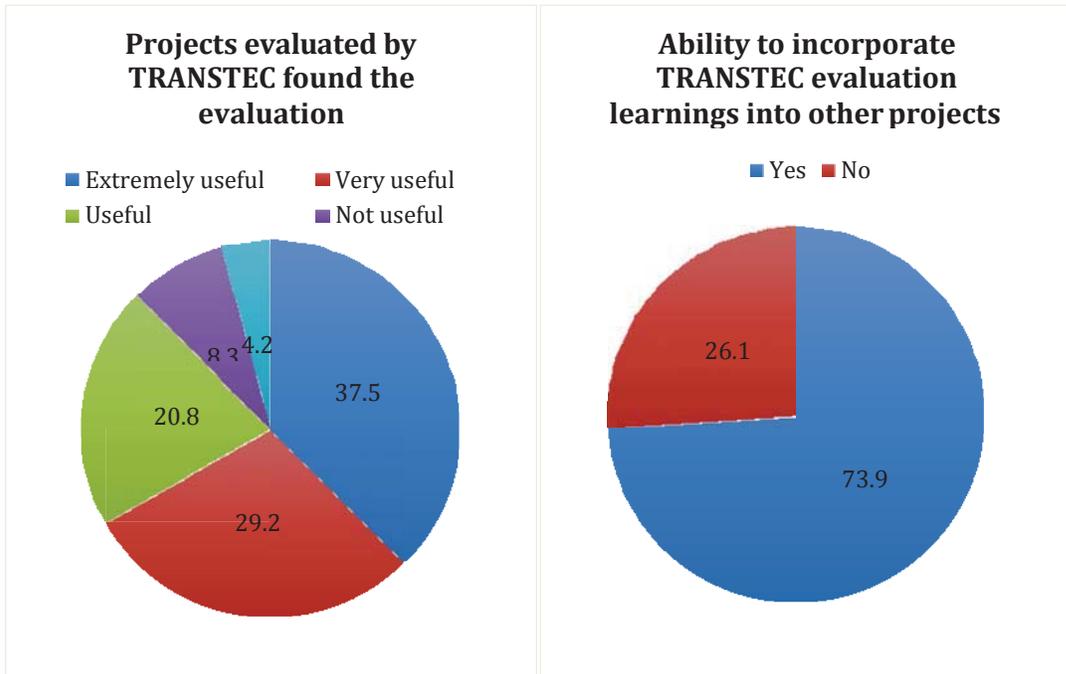
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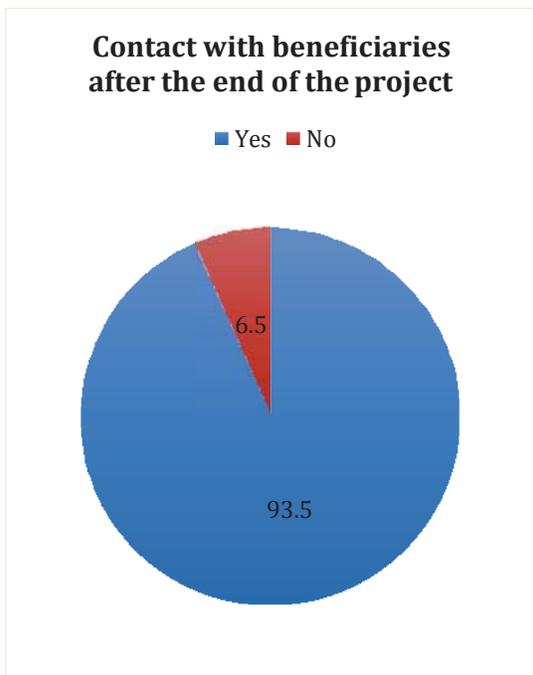
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### Annex 3. Questionnaire Desk Review with average data results

Consolidated indicator table for all projects included in the desk review

Beneficiary/Implementer: ALL IMPLEMENTERS

Area of intervention: All areas of intervention

Country: Global

Region: Global

100,00

Dimension	Sub Dimension	Component (Indicator)	Description of the component	Assessment*	Relative value	TOTAL	
<b>Relevance and Design (40%)</b>	<b>Relevance of selected project proposals (50%)</b>	<i>In relation to the mandate of UNDEF</i>	The degree of relevance between the programme and UNDEF's mandate.	1,00	0,25	0,25	
		<i>In relation to the strengthening of CSOs</i>	The degree to which weaker CSOs (in need of strengthening) are selected over stronger, more developed ones.	1,00	0,25	0,25	
		<i>In relation to the project and its contents</i>	The quality of the project and its contents, including theory of change and logical framework, according to the evaluation team	1,00	0,25	0,25	
		<i>In relation to national context</i>	The degree to which the programme is tailored to and in line with the national context.	1,00	0,25	0,25	
	<b>Sub-dimension relevance</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension relevance</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension relevance</b>	<b>50,00</b>	
	<b>Project Design (50%)</b>	<b>Hierarchy of Objectives</b>	Objectives, outcomes, outputs are defined and designed clearly, and all levels are interlinked coherently	1,00	0,20	0,20	
		<b>Coherence of Work Plan and Allocation of Resources</b>	Work Plan (activities, timeline, implementing parties) are defined clearly; resource allocation is reasonable	1,00	0,20	0,20	
		<b>Adequacy of other key elements of project design</b>	Risk analysis, management arrangements, sustainability considerations are all clearly set	1,00	0,20	0,20	
		<b>Attention to gender and marginalized population inclusion</b>	Level of attention to or empowerment of vulnerable groups, including gender and marginalized population.	1,00	0,20	0,20	
		<b>Monitoring tools and mechanisms</b>	Indicators and targets are measurable, and milestones clearly set, and the grantee's own monitoring system is defined	1,00	0,20	0,20	
	<b>Sub-dimension design of the proposal and coherence</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension Proposal and coherence</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension design of the proposal</b>	<b>50,00</b>	
	<b>Assessment dimension design, coherence and relevance</b>				<b>100,00</b>	<b>Sub-total Design and Relevance</b>	<b>40,00</b>

<b>Implementation (40%)</b>	<b>Efficiency (25%)</b>	<b>Outputs achieved with planned funds</b>	The outputs were achieved with the resources available	1,00	0,50	<b>0,50</b>	
		<b>Outputs achieved in time framework</b>	The outputs were achieved in the planned time framework	1,00	0,50	<b>0,50</b>	
	<b>Sub-dimension efficiency</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension efficiency</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension efficiency</b>	<b>25,00</b>	
	<b>Effectiveness (25%)</b>	<b>Outputs achievement</b>	The degree of intended outputs achieved	1,00	0,40	<b>0,40</b>	
		<b>Outcomes achievement</b>	The degree of intended outcomes achieved	1,00	0,30	<b>0,30</b>	
		<b>Impact achievement</b>	The degree of intended impact achieved	1,00	0,30	<b>0,30</b>	
	<b>Sub-dimension effectiveness</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension effectiveness</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension effectiveness</b>	<b>25,00</b>	
	<b>Reporting &amp; Monitoring (50%)</b>	<b>Reliability of monitoring</b>	Timeliness of milestone monitoring. Efficiency of monitoring system.	1,00	0,30	<b>0,30</b>	
		<b>Quality of reporting (Narrative)</b>	Quality of the implementation's narrative reports by grantees.	1,00	0,35	<b>0,35</b>	
		<b>Quality of reporting (Financial)</b>	Quality of the implementation's financial reports by grantees.	1,00	0,35	<b>0,35</b>	
<b>Sub-dimension reporting and monitoring</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension quality of reporting and monitoring</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension quality of reporting and monitoring</b>	<b>50,00</b>		
<b>Assessment dimension implementation</b>			<b>100,00</b>	<b>Sub total dimension implementation</b>	<b>40,00</b>		
<b>Sustainability (20%)</b>	<b>Projects' sustainability (50%)</b>	<b>Results sustainability</b>	The outcomes and outputs outlast or have the potential to outlast the project implementation (according to the evaluation team)	1,00	1,00	<b>1,00</b>	
		<b>Sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>	<b>50,00</b>
	<b>Civil society organization's sustainability (50%)</b>	<b>CSO' sustainability after UNDEF</b>	Through the project design and implementation, the CSO developed / strengthened skills that they continue to use in their work. (According to the project manager)		1,00	1,00	<b>1,00</b>
			<b>Sub-dimension CSO' sustainability</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension CSO' sustainability</b>	<b>100,00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension CSO' sustainability</b>
<b>Assessment dimension sustainability</b>			<b>100,00</b>	<b>Sub total dimension sustainability</b>	<b>20,00</b>		

\* not achieved=0.20; Need to improve=0.40; Acceptable=0.60; Good=0.80; Excellent=1

<b>Criteria</b>		
Excellent	1	The project shows to be relevant, efficient, effective, coherent and sustainable beyond expectations
Good	0.80	The project shows to be a good project in all the criteria examined
Acceptable	0.60	The project is acceptable and some of the criteria of evaluation are met
Not acceptable	0.40	The project present some limitations in various criteria examined
Strong limitations	0.20	The project is not acceptable in the majority of the criteria examined

#### Annex 4. Lessons Learned from Desk Review

The desk review could highlight some markers that affect positively and negatively the results of the projects. These lessons learnt are listed below divided in CSOs positive and negative attributes and projects positive and negative attributes.

Positive markers	Negative markers
<b>CSO's attributes</b>	
<p><b>Adequacy:</b> Successful projects are implemented by an organization that (i) is well implemented and respected in the country; (ii) benefits from expert competences in the domain of the project action; (iii) designs the project according to their own strategy and strengths.</p> <p><b>Synergy:</b> Successful projects have built coordination with the public sector, and were able to build a solid network with other public and private organizations, or transform themselves into a sector project (e.g. media information). This allowed them to broaden the scope of the intervention, and ensure the sustainability of its outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Non-expertise:</b> Projects that did not reach their goals, or even had negative effects on their environment are characterized by a lack of specific expertise on the topic of their action. This can be either because (i) the organisation out-passed its area of expertise; (ii) the organisation did not pay attention to the country-specific context; or (iii) the organisation had no in-country support, or anchorage.</p> <p><b>Insulation:</b> Projects that are not able to engage together different beneficiaries, civil society groups, and other public actors; or to build a systemic approach to create synergies around a common topic of interest fail to achieve any relevant outcomes.</p> <p><b>Co-dependence:</b> Less successful projects often have their outcomes based on other actors' actions, and do not have direct influence on them. Therefore, important parts of their action are outside of their control, which harms the reach and realization of the project.</p>
<b>Project's attributes</b>	
<p><b>Meaningfulness:</b> Successful projects are action-oriented, and tailored to bring a simple, effective and impacting response to specific felt needs. They do not promise a radical change, but deploy a reasonable, planned, and insightful response to a specific situation.</p> <p><b>Research base:</b> Successful projects are characterized by a deep and relevant analysis upon which the project is built following a strategic plan or 'theory of change'. The analysis encompasses careful and thorough research about context, needs, and every parameter that might be of importance to the beneficiaries, and thus impact the project.</p> <p><b>Context specificity:</b> Successful projects are carefully designed to the specific context in which they will operate. This includes a rigorous risk analysis, and an in-depth knowledge of the contextual challenges the project can or might face.</p> <p><b>Flexibility:</b> Successful projects are well planned, but do allow enough space for modifications and changes following country-specific unplanned events and elements of change. Successful projects are therefore flexible in the implementation of their activities, which are tailored to be context-specific.</p> <p><b>Pacing and planning:</b> Successful projects are part of a long-term action plan aiming at bringing about durable and meaningful change; in such, if they can be broad in some cases they are not holistic, they rather implement a time-paced strategy and do address one issue at a time.</p> <p><b>Innovation:</b> Successful projects strive for innovative objectives aimed at enriching an already existing service, structure, or process to expand its reach.</p> <p><b>Empowerment:</b> Successful projects do strive for a progressive and effective action that outlasts the duration of the project; they create favorable conditions that allow beneficiaries to become themselves actors of change, and pursue the initial objective of the project above its initial scope, and once the project is finished. The "training of trainer" model is a significant example.</p> <p><b>Inclusion:</b> Successful projects are able to engage, beyond direct beneficiaries, different groups and stakeholders, and engage diverging opinions in a space for debate and interaction, enabling to accept each other as a valid interlocutor.</p> <p><b>Environment:</b> The most successful projects were able to initiate a shift in their operating environment by engaging with a diverse spectrum of stakeholders, by opening up a space of debate for the latter, and by accompanying them in the solution-drafting phase.</p> <p><b>Sustainability:</b> Successful projects do include in their plan elements to ensure the sustainability of their action, once the project timeframe ended. Sustainability is not only considered financially, but mainly based on social and cultural aspects.</p> <p><b>Communication:</b> Successful projects are able to effectively communicate about their action to its beneficiaries, counterparts, and other organizations. A strong and effective outreach and communication strategy supports the impact of their advocacy work.</p>	<p><b>Project orientation:</b> The replication of projects and activities, previously successful, can prove detrimental when replicated to another environment, regardless of its differing context. This makes the project inadequate, and sometimes even harmful to the context of implementation.</p> <p><b>Inconsistency:</b> An unclear and non-coherent definition of the project objectives, and a lack of focus for these weakens the structure of the project, and is detrimental to its impact. Similarly, if the project ambitions are too high and broad, this might result in a disconnection between the aims and the modalities of the project, and deters from implementing consistent activities. Similarly, a lack of coherence between the different project activities is detrimental to its effectiveness.</p> <p><b>Integration:</b> A lack of coordination amongst the different aspects of a project makes unclear their individual contribution to the outputs and outcomes of the project, and leads to an incomplete or failed implementation.</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Less successful projects are often characterized by an over-ambitious action program, with respect to the timing and/or funding available. This results in poor, and incomplete carrying out of project actions, and harms both project beneficiaries and the reputation of the organisation.</p> <p><b>Harm:</b> The non-respect of the "do no harm" principle is a threatening attribute not only for the project itself, but for the broader environment in which it takes place. Insufficient or non-exhaustive risk-assessments can lead to a misdiagnosis of the issues, and the design of a project action that will antagonize beneficiaries, instead of supporting them.</p> <p><b>Output orientation:</b> Poorly successful projects are prone to be output rather than outcome oriented. In such, they are less sensitive to the specific needs of beneficiary sub-groups, and do not engage in a substantive action.</p>

## Annex 5. Terms of Reference



### UNDEF EVALUATION Consultancy Terms of Reference

#### Background

1. UNDEF was established by the UN Secretary-General in 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund to support democratization efforts around the world. UNDEF supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. The large majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations -- both in the transition and consolidation phases of democratization. In this way, UNDEF plays a novel and unique role in complementing the UN's traditional work -- the work with Governments -- to strengthen democratic governance around the world. UNDEF subsists entirely on voluntary contributions from Governments; in 2013, it surpassed 150 million dollars in contributions and now counts more than 40 countries as donors, including many middle- and low-income States in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
2. UNDEF projects are two years long and fall under one or more of seven main areas; Community Activism, Rule of Law and Human Rights, Tools for Knowledge, Women's Empowerment, Youth Engagement, Media and Freedom of Information, Strengthening Civil Society Capacity for Interaction with Government. UNDEF grants range from US\$100,000 to US\$300,000. Project proposals are subject to a highly rigorous and competitive selection process, as UNDEF receives an average of about 2,000-3,000 proposals a year and only some 50-60 are selected. In nine Rounds of Funding so far, UNDEF has supported some 600 projects in more than 100 countries.
3. As a basis for knowledge-sharing, lessons learned, improved project selection and management, and transparency, UNDEF contracted the commercial evaluator Transtec to conduct project evaluations. As of now, Transtec has conducted over 150 post-project evaluations of Round 2 to 6. Its contract is due to end in July 2016. Transtec evaluations are, in general, project specific and do not provide an overarching evaluation of the overall impact and effectiveness of UNDEF as a UN fund.
4. As a part of the agreement between Sida and UNDEF an independent external evaluation should take place during 2016 focusing on the results achieved and effectiveness of the Fund.
5. In order to undertake this evaluation, UNDEF is looking for two international Consultants to carry out the evaluation of the Fund in line with the objectives and conditions as specified below.

#### Objective

6. The overall objective of the Consultants' work is to provide an independent external evaluation of UNDEF focusing on results achieved and the effectiveness of the Fund. Furthermore, the evaluation should provide information on the progression and the comparative advantages of the Fund as a democracy support actor over the past 10 years. The evaluation should provide the following:

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- An assessment of the quality and performance of UNDEF projects and UNDEF's role in refining their design and managing them, taking into account the applicable UN policies, rules and regulations.
- An assessment of the process for selection of projects – methodology and results and possible concerns.
- An assessment of how and to what extent the pre-established selection criteria were used and the extent to which transparency, accountability and independence were ensured.
- An assessment of UNDEF's approach to monitoring and evaluation, specifically in relation to sustainability of the Fund's knowledge and expertise.
- An account of lessons learned and best practices that could inform UNDEF future programme funding and improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its activities.

### **Methodology**

7. The evaluation exercise will consist of home-based work and interaction with the UNDEF Secretariat, UNDEF Board members, UNDEF's contracted commercial evaluators Transtec, as well as UNDEF grantees and project beneficiaries. It will include desk reviews as well as field/project-site visits. The evaluation will cover activities of UNDEF and its projects during the period 2009-2014 as more recent Rounds have not yield any accomplishments yet.
8. The evaluation should include a desk survey across a sample of at least 100 UNDEF projects funded through Rounds 3 to 8. The evaluation should also include five to 10 field visits covering at least 20 projects.
9. The evaluation should include interviews with important UNDEF stakeholders, taking into account suggestions from UNDEF.
10. The evaluation should be analytical in nature and put forward specific recommendations divided into separate categories and in order of priority. It should also be results-based and examine the results achieved in relation to the framework developed in the UNDEF/Sida Programme Document.
11. Documentation available for review includes project documents, mid-term reports, milestone reports, financial reports and third party evaluations (if conducted). They can be found on the UNDEF database to which the Consultants will be given access. The Consultants will also have access to all UNDEF programming, procedural and policy documents.
12. The evaluation will not re-evaluate individual projects. However the evaluation will take stock of the existing post-project evaluations (Transtec and non-commercial), consolidate and draw conclusions from already published individual evaluations including their conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

13. Evaluation questions will also highlight the role of UNDEF's including the degree of oversight by UNDEF during project implementation, UNDEF flexibility on changes in project implementation, the quality of communication, and advice during project design.
14. The criteria for the selection of five to 10 field/project-site visits should ensure a representative selection in terms of geography; funding and level of success (e.g. cover both high and low performing projects).
15. The evaluation will be undertaken in accordance with the OECD criteria of evaluation and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, which are available here:  
<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/548>

### Outputs

16. The Consultant will submit an end of evaluation report no longer than 40 pages including any tables and graphs but excluding annexes, with an executive summary of two-three pages. The cover letter of the evaluation report must be signed by the evaluator.

The report will clearly:

- Analyze the **challenges** and the lessons learned from managing projects by the implementing agencies and by UNDEF:
- Highlight the **lessons learnt** from results achieved by UNDEF projects, the process followed, the strategy applied and provide recommendations
- Analyze the **overall impact** of UNDEF projects in addressing gender and targeting marginalized groups,
- Highlight **good practices, success stories and instructive anecdotal information**
- Analyze the **added value of UNDEF funding**

The final report should focus on answering fundamental questions such as:

- What worked well and should continue?
- What did not work well but should be strengthened?
- What did not work well and should discontinue?
- What are the qualitative and quantitative achievements that summarize, in concrete terms, what UNDEF has accomplished?
- How are budgets and work plans used to ensure cost effectiveness and value for money?
- What are the categories of specific challenges ahead?
- What are recommended next steps, by category?

17. The evaluation should cover the following elements:
  - An assessment of the **relevance** of UNDEF  
The degree to which UNDEF's establishment was justified and appropriate in relation to the need and situation on the national/regional/global level in 2005 and in 2016. The degree to which projects financed by UNDEF were relevant and appropriate at the time they were approved and in 2016.

- An assessment of the **effectiveness** of UNDEF  
The extent to which the UNDEF's stated objectives are achieved or the likelihood that they will be achieved for all project types. UNDEF's effectiveness should be assessed in accordance with the activities, outputs and outcomes planned in its projects as well as those detailed in the results framework enclosed in the UNDEF Programme Document. Factors contributing to and detracting from the results are to be included in the evaluation report.
- An assessment of the **efficiency** of UNDEF  
This requires an analysis and the evaluation of the overall performance of the Fund, of its outcomes, outputs in relation to the inputs, the financial management and of its projects.
- An assessment of the **sustainability** of UNDEF  
The extent to which benefits or results from UNDEF projects will continue or are likely to continue after UNDEF's support has come to an end (i.e. the lasting results, changes in behavior, possible follow-up projects) including an examination of the design and implementation of projects, whether this impacted on project results and if they can be sustained beyond project completion.
- An assessment of the **impact** that UNDEF has achieved and is likely to achieve in the future as a whole. This requires measuring the positive and negative effects produced or caused by UNDEF project on society or parts thereof while taking into account UNDEF'S uniqueness.
- An assessment of UNDEF's **governance structure** in relation to the mandate of UNDEF, and whether the set-up of UNDEF is the most appropriate for achieving cost-effective results.

18 The evaluation report shall follow the following structure and contain the following elements:

- a) General Information on the Fund and its projects (i.e. background, programme objective and components)
- b) Evaluation process and methodology
- c) Evaluation by key criteria (see above)
  - i. relevance
  - ii. effectiveness
  - iii. efficiency
  - iv. sustainability
  - v. impact
- d) Additional considerations (if any)
- e) Evaluation conclusions and recommendations

#### **Duties and responsibilities**

19. In addition to delivering the outputs described above, the Senior Consultant will be responsible for the overall organization of the work, supervision and guidance of the second Consultant and final submission and quality control of the evaluation report. The role of the second Consultant will be to support the Senior Consultant in his/her [their] tasks in particular in regards to research, data collection and analysis.

## **Timeline**

20. The evaluation will start in the second quarter of 2016. It should be completed within six months. The total number of person days for both Consultants should not exceed 150 days. The final report should be submitted to UNDEF before 01 December 2016.
21. Upon selection the Senior Consultant will submit to UNDEF a Launch Note which will provide further detail of how the team intends to implement evaluation, guided by the methodology above. This note will provide a detailed timeline for the work. The Launch Note will also specify the number of days required for reviewing the projects, as well as the projected timeline for project visits.
22. The consultants will also submit a mid-term progress report to UNDEF no longer than 10 summarizing work achieved to date, updating to the timeline and highlighting concerns (if any).

## **Required Skills and Experience**

### Education (both Consultants):

- Masters or equivalent in relevant field of political or social science, development studies, human rights and democracy promotion or comparable relevant field.

### Experience (**Senior Consultant**):

- At least 10 years of directly relevant professional experience in project management, results-based management, monitoring and evaluation, including monitoring technical cooperation and development activities and projects.
- A minimum of 10 years' experience at international level in managing or conducting project evaluations with particular emphasis on those related to democracy support, governance, peace-building or human rights is required.
- At least five successfully completed evaluations in the area mentioned above
- A track record of working in developing countries, conducting evaluations at country/field level
- In-depth knowledge of global and regional democracy support organizations.

### Experience (**Consultant**):

- At least 7 years of directly relevant professional experience in project management, results-based management, monitoring and evaluation, including monitoring technical cooperation and development activities and projects.
- A minimum of 5 years' experience at international level in conducting or contributing to project evaluations with particular emphasis on those related to democracy support, governance, peace-building or human rights is required.
- A track record of working in developing countries, conducting evaluations at country/field level
- In-depth knowledge of global and regional democracy support organizations.

### Knowledge (both Consultants):

- Strong knowledge of democracy, governance, human rights and justice sector / development would be an asset including related thematic issues such as rights and democratic dialogue; freedom of expression and access to information; civil society capacity development; rule of law and justice systems strengthening, including judicial reform & access to justice; transparency, integrity and anti-corruption, support for legislative processes & public institutions, prevention of violence & promoting reconciliation; anti-discrimination and the inclusion of marginalized and excluded groups
- Familiarity with the UN evaluation policy, norms and standards; and
- Knowledge in the use of computers and office software packages and handling of web based monitoring systems.

Language:

- Fluency in both English and French
- Excellent oral and written English and for the Senior Consultant a proven publication record in English.

**Application process**

Interested candidates can apply by submitting a UN Personal History Profile and a short cover note explaining why they are well suited to undertake the evaluation to [democracyfund@un.org](mailto:democracyfund@un.org) by **Monday 15 February 2016**

To generate a PHP visit <https://inspira.un.org>

The terms and conditions governing the engagement of UN consultants, including fee and remuneration levels, are contained in document [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=ST/AI/2013/4](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=ST/AI/2013/4)

## **Annex 6: Inception Report**

### **Independent Evaluation of the UN Democracy Fund: 2009-2014 Inception Report - Overview of Methodology**

#### **1. Evaluation overview**

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) was established by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General in 2005 as a UN General Trust Fund to support democratisation efforts around the world. UNDEF supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes.

The majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations (CSOs) - both in the transition and consolidation phases of democratisation. In this way, UNDEF plays a novel and unique role in complementing the UN's traditional work - work with Member States and populations, broadly speaking - to strengthen democratic governance around the world through targeted assistance to organised civil society actors<sup>39</sup> and other relevant stakeholders. According to the Terms of Reference (TORs), UNDEF subsists entirely on voluntary contributions from governments; in 2013, it surpassed 150 million dollars in contributions and now counts more than 40 countries as donors, including many middle- and low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As a part of the agreement between the Swedish international development cooperation agency (SIDA) and UNDEF an independent external evaluation should take place during the course of 2016, focusing on the results achieved and effectiveness of the Fund. This document outlines the objectives for that evaluation as well as the methodology, including: the conceptual framework; the theory of change; a refinement of the OECD-DAC criteria; a “framework for success”; a mapping of the key stakeholders; information on the data-gathering process; an evaluation matrix; and, an overview of the selection criteria for projects. The document concludes with an overview of the proposed timeline for the evaluation.

It should be noted that any strong evaluation methodology needs to remain flexible and, therefore, this note is subject to change.

#### **2. Evaluation objectives**

The objective of this exercise is to provide an independent external evaluation of UNDEF focusing on results achieved, the effectiveness of the Fund, strengths and weaknesses, as well as lessons learned. Furthermore, the evaluation will provide information on the progression and the comparative advantages of the Fund as a democracy support actor over the past 10 years. More specifically, the evaluation will provide the following:

- An assessment of UNDEF’s management structure, position within the UN system and ability to work with other actors – internal and external to the organization;
- An assessment of the process for selection of projects, including how and to what extent the pre-established selection criteria were used and the extent to which transparency, accountability and independence were ensured;

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<sup>39</sup> While the majority of the UN system entities actually works with or through OSCs, the appreciation refer to: a) Most other Secretariat entities work predominantly with Member States b) No other UN entities’ work specifically targets the strengthening of civil society actors as a goal in of itself.

- An assessment of the quality and performance of UNDEF projects and UNDEF's role in refining their design and managing them, taking into account the applicable UN policies, rules and regulations;
- An assessment of UNDEF's approach to monitoring and evaluation, specifically in relation to sustainability of the Fund's knowledge and expertise;
- An assessment of the outputs, outcomes and, where possible, perceptions of the *impact* of UNDEF's work broadly, and of the projects specifically; and,
- An account of lessons learned and best practices that could inform UNDEF future programme funding and improve the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its activities.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Conceptual framework

This evaluation serves as a learning tool intended to facilitate a reflection of UNDEF's work by collecting and analysing secondary data and insights from secondary sources, as well as facts, perceptions and reflections of relevant primary sources, including key stakeholders at UNHQ, CSOs and project beneficiaries in the field. This process will help formulate a comprehensive picture of the Fund with the aim of contributing to its institutional growth and performance by highlighting and providing evidence of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and risks to be used by UNDEF as a point of reference for future planning.

Based on the objectives defined on the TORs, the evaluation will use an inductive approach applied to three main dimensions of the work of UNDEF:

1. **Advisory, support, management, funding structures and processes:** This part of the evaluation seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how UNDEF is advised, supported, managed and funded in the context of the UN system, including through – but not limited to – engagement with the Advisory Board, Program Consultative Group, the UN Office for Partnerships (UNOP), the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), the Fifth Committee and other relevant stakeholders.
2. **Operations and outputs of UNDEF:** This part of the evaluation seeks to obtain an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the processes managed directly or indirectly by UNDEF, including the communication and outreach strategy, the screening and selection process, guidance provided to CSOs during the transition from project selection to project development, the various facets of the monitoring and evaluation process, and the database for project management.<sup>40</sup>
3. **The outputs, outcomes and results (and, where possible, impact) of CSO/relevant projects:** This part of the evaluation will assess the projects implemented by CSOs paying particular attention to the geopolitical context of the projects and their activity

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<sup>40</sup> According to its TORs, UNDEF functions are: (i) develop programme funding criteria, in consultation with the Programme Consultative Group; (ii) solicit and receive proposals on the basis of guidelines approved by the Advisory Board; (iii) review project proposals for submission to the Advisory Board; (iv) conduct outreach activities; (v) facilitate in-kind donations of technical assistance from States and NGOs; (vi) arrange monitoring and evaluation, as well as audit exercises; (vii) handle all aspects of the allocation, disbursement and accounting of funds; (viii) submit reports to the ACABQ and Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, as and when required

focus areas; the achievement of outputs and outcomes; the attainment of tangible results; and, perceptions of impact amongst direct and indirect beneficiaries. This section of the evaluation will also shed light on lessons learnt from support to democratisation processes. NB. Due to the nature of programming in this space and the constraints associated with this evaluation, it will not be possible to conduct an *impact evaluation per se*; consequently the evaluation will focus on perceptions of impact and anecdotal evidence for such perceptions. It will be important to note that any evidence of a *correlation* between support to CSOs and improved levels of democratisation cannot be considered as *causation*.

### 3.2 Theory of change

Although a theory of change is not clearly expressed in the TOR or any other documents available at this moment, the evaluation team propose the following preliminary hypothesis as a baseline to be further enhanced – and assessed - during the fieldwork; the hypothesis is supported by an elaboration of assumptions which underlie them, and which will also need to be tested. (N.B. The below should be considered as a proposition; however, the theory of change and assumptions will be discussed and refined in discussion with UNDEF).

- If relevant CSOs can be encouraged and supported to develop democratisation-related projects in key areas identified by UNDEF - community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government – then projects in these key areas will be developed and implemented.

→ *Assumption one to test:* Community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government are the most relevant activity areas for enhanced democratisation.

- If support and funds are provided to refine the design of such projects in these domains then relevant and emergent CSOs will be better prepared to promote themes related to improved democratization on the ground.

→ *Assumption two to test:* Support provided by UNDEF is critical to the effective design of projects related to these themes i.e. Support provided by UNDEF results in more robust projects.

- If CSOs are better prepared to promote key democratisation themes on the ground, then they will be more successful in the delivery of desired outcomes.

→ *Assumption three to test:* Support provided by UNDEF results in projects that are more effectively implemented, and which, therefore, lead to more sustainable results.

- If the desired outcomes are consistent and coherent, and actively support the inclusion of marginalised groups in society then these outcomes will contribute to strengthening the voice of civil society, promoting human rights, and encouraging the participation of all groups in democratic processes.

→ *Assumption four to test:* Support to civil society organisations is consistent and coherent (in line with the work of other UN and non-UN actors), and focuses on marginalised/excluded groups.

- If CSOs are more successful in strengthening the voice of civil society, promoting human rights and encouraging the participation of all groups in democratic processes, they will contribute to a process of democratisation and become relevant actors in a good governance process.

→ *Assumption five to test:* Civil society actors are critical to the process of democratisation.

### 3.3 Refinement of OECD-DAC criteria

The research framework will use and expand upon the OECD/DAC principles for evaluation of development assistance based on the specific criteria established in the TORs of the evaluation; the below set of questions, therefore, will inform the desk review, interview framework and surveys:

- **Relevance:** *The degree to which UNDEF's establishment was justified and appropriate in relation to the need and situation on the national/regional/global level in 2005 and in 2016. The degree to which projects financed by UNDEF were relevant and appropriate at the time they were approved and since.*
  - To what extent did/does UNDEF respond to the needs of strengthening the role of CSOs, and other relevant actors?
  - How did/do the projects respond to the mandate of UNDEF and specific needs on the ground, and to what effect?
  - To what extent are the goals of UNDEF still valid? i.e. Are there any contextual changes which make the fund's goals no longer valid?
- **Effectiveness:** *The extent to which UNDEF's stated objectives are achieved or the likelihood that they will be achieved for all project types. UNDEF's effectiveness should be assessed in accordance with the activities, outputs and outcomes planned in its projects as well as those detailed in the results framework enclosed in the UNDEF Programme Document. Factors contributing to and detracting from the results are to be included in the evaluation report.*
  - To what extent have the objectives of UNDEF been achieved/are likely to be achieved?
  - To what extent have the objectives of the projects funded by UNDEF been achieved/are likely to be achieved?
  - What factors contributed to and/or influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the projects and UNDEF objectives?
  - Were there any (positive or negative) unintended consequences of UNDEF's work?
- **Efficiency:** *To conduct an analysis and evaluation of the overall performance of the Fund, of its outcomes, outputs in relation to the inputs, the financial management and of its projects.*

- Were/are the activities (including project selection, management, monitoring, etc.) of UNDEF cost-efficient (in terms of staff resources, financial resources, etc.)?
  - Was/is UNDEF's governance structure the most appropriate for achieving cost-effective results, in relation to its mandate, and whether its set-up is?
  - How do these costs relate to the benefits?
  - Were the objectives achieved on time and, if so, what facilitated this and if not, what hampered timely delivery?
  - Was/were the projects implemented in the most cost efficient way compared to eventual alternatives?
- **Impact:** *An assessment of the impact that UNDEF has achieved and is likely to achieve in the future as a whole. This requires measuring the positive and negative effects (intended/unintended) produced or caused by UNDEF projects on society or parts thereof while taking into account UNDEF'S uniqueness.*
    - What were the short-, medium- and long-term impacts for and on UNDEF, (positive and negative)?
    - What were the short-, medium- and long-term impacts for the selected CSOs and other relevant stakeholders (positive and negative)?
    - To what extent did these impacts on CSOs make operations more effective and efficient?
    - Were there any unintended results/consequences (positive or negative)?
    - If UNDEF had not existed, what would this mean for the UN System as a whole, and for support of CSOs specifically?
- **Sustainability:** *The extent to which benefits or results from UNDEF projects will continue or are likely to continue after UNDEF's support has come to an end (i.e. the lasting results, changes in behaviour, possible follow-up projects) including an examination of the design and implementation of projects, whether this impacted on project results and if they can be sustained beyond project completion.*
    - To what extent will the benefits to the CSOs continue if/when donor support is withdrawn?
    - To what extent would the benefits of the projects continue if/when donor support is withdrawn?
    - What factors help/hinder the sustainability of the CSOs and the projects outputs and outcomes?
    - How sustainable is UNDEF as an entity? (Or something that gets at this question, too – and the presence or absence of regular budget funding – the constraints and benefits of having regular funding etc.).

And additionally, the evaluation will seek to ascertain the following:

- **Coherence:** *The extent to which the work of UNDEF is coherent with the United Nations' mandate and its strategy and work at central level and in the field, and with other actors working in the field of democratisation.*

- Was UNDEF consistent with and/or complementary to the programmes/projects/activities of other UN system entities and non-UN System entities?
- Were linkages made with other efforts across the UN system as and where appropriate?
- Is it UNDEF as a whole coherent with the United Nation system and with other actors working in the field of democratization?
- Does UNDEF encourage CSO collaboration and coherence with the government?

**A common question across all six principles: what is the evidence to substantiate claims of (relevance/effectiveness/impact/efficiency/sustainability/coherence)?**

**3.4 “Framework for success”**

The methodology seeks to test an emerging (and therefore flexible) working hypothesis that the link between the support provided by UNDEF (proposal selection, funding, guidance and support), outputs (implementation of CSOs projects) and outcomes (enhanced democratization) is dependent on a “framework for success” composed of the following key factors:

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E

NB. This section will be completed following a discussion with UNDEF concerning how they define “success”.

**3.5 Mapping of key stakeholders**

A variety of strategies – outlined below in the section on the data-gathering process – will be adapted to engage with the following three groups of stakeholders:

**i) UNDEF support structure:**

- Advisory board members (past and present): Member States; civil society organisations; independent members.
- Programme Consultative Group: Representatives from the Department of Political Affairs (DPA); the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR); the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO); the UN Development Programme (UNDP); the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN-Women
- Other UN personnel related to UNDEF: At central level - EOSG, UNOP, MFPTO and other in the field.

**ii) UNDEF Personnel**

- Director and Assistant Director
- Programmatic staff
- Administrative Staff
- Interns

**iii) Direct and indirect beneficiaries**

- Direct beneficiaries: The CSOs who receive/received funds and support from UNDEF;
- Indirect beneficiaries: The beneficiaries of the projects supported by UNDEF (including civil society, general populations and governments).
- Relevant partners/observers: Multi-lateral and bilateral partners, other relevant entities working in the field of democratisation; and, other civil society actors present in the country in question and/or who can speak to the engagement, outputs and outcomes relevant to the projects under analysis.

This strategy, and the identification of these three groups of stakeholders will allow for a rich data gathering process and a comprehensive triangulation of information during the analysis phase.

### ***3.6 Data gathering process/evaluation phases***

The methodology will use a mixed method approach using quantitative and qualitative instruments. Due to the characteristics of the evaluation, and the concomitant focus on insights, lessons learned and best practices, it will focus more on the collection of qualitative data, which is more amenable to such insights. The different phases and data gathering modalities are outlined below and covered in more detail in the final section of this document concerning the ‘timetable’.

- **Phase one - Desk review of key documents and methodology design:** This phase of the evaluation focuses on a review of documents produced by UNDEF, evaluation available on-line and other sources of information, including publications, websites and reports. This phase informs the development of the methodology, the interview frameworks and project/case selection.
- **Phase two - Data collection:** The data collection methodology has been tailored to different stakeholder groups as per the below; however, the questions asked to each of these groups will remain – substantively – the same to follow for comparison and triangulation; all interviews will be held under conditions of anonymity and confidentiality i.e. only for the purposes of this report.
  - **Advisory Board, Programme Consultative Group, UNDEF representatives, other UN and non-UN representatives/stakeholders:** Key actors and focal points at headquarters will be engaged for approx. 45-60 minutes in a semi-structured interviews along the below lines of enquiry; ideally UNDEF staff will also be engaged in the context of focus groups to delve more deeply into key issues such as: a SWOT analysis; the theory of change; assumptions; the “framework for success” outlined above and steer for key issues related to the case studies.
  - **Extensive quantitative analysis (600+ projects):** All beneficiaries since the Fund began will be requested to complete an on-line survey; the survey will allow for some quantitative analysis of key findings.
  - **Indepth desk review (50 projects):** 50 projects will be selected for deeper analysis (as per the criteria outlined below); analysis will include an extensive desk review of materials produced by both UNDEF and the recipients as well as external evaluations; the 50 direct beneficiaries selected

will also be asked to complete a questionnaire<sup>41</sup>. During the course of this review, an indicator table has been developed to provide as quantitative assessment and ranking of the projects; this will be complimented by a qualitative table – to be completed for all projects – which seeks to ascertain more information on the strengths and weaknesses of the projects, insights and lessons learnt. See Annex Three and Four respectively for more information.

- **Case studies (20 projects):** Using the criteria developed below, 20 projects will be selected to serve the purpose of case studies. Case study methodology includes an extensive desk review, questionnaires, and field visits where direct beneficiaries, indirect beneficiaries and relevant partners/stakeholders will be engaged in semi-structured interviews.

The questions to be asked in the context of the on-line questionnaires and in person interviews are included in Annex One.

- **Phase three - Data analysis and write-up:** This phase of the evaluation will focus on triangulating the data in order to distil major findings, and to then be able to elaborate on the key recommendations.
- **Phase four – Review:** This phase of the analysis includes two rounds of review with UNDEF and related colleagues, providing an opportunity for an exchange of views and an indepth dialogue on the major findings and recommendations.
- **Phase five - Presentation and next steps:** This phase of the evaluation involves engagement with the donor, SIDA, as and where appropriate on the one hand, and with UNDEF concerning the implementation of selected recommendations on the other.

### 3.7 Evaluation matrix

The evaluation data gathering process is expressed in the following evaluation’s matrix, which resumes, according to the evaluation criteria, the evaluation questions, the source of information and the instruments to be used to gather data.

**Table one: Evaluation Matrix with key sources**

<b>Evaluation Matrix UNDEF evaluation</b>			
<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Information Source</b>	<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>
<b>A. The degree to which UNDEF’s establishment was justified and appropriate in relation to the need and situation on the national/regional/global level in 2005 and in 2016. The degree to which projects financed by UNDEF were relevant and appropriate at the time they were approved and in 2016.</b>			
1. To what extent did/does UNDEF respond to the needs of strengthening the role of CSOs, and other relevant actors?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Relevance
2. How did/do the projects respond to the	- Secondary information	- Desk Review	Relevance

<sup>41</sup> The number of projects to be reviewed has decreased from 100 to 50 after a negotiation between the Fund And SIDA, which changed the outreach of the grantees to be contacted during the evaluation as expressed in the following phrase: “The evaluation should include a general survey by questionnaire of all 500+ UNDEF projects; a more in-depth desk review of 50 UNDEF projects; and visits to 8-10 countries covering a total of 10-20 projects”..

mandate of UNDEF and specific needs on the ground, and to what effect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	
3. To what extent are the goals of UNDEF still valid? i.e. Are there any contextual changes which make the fund's goals no longer valid?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Relevance
<p><b>B. The extent to which the UNDEF's stated objectives are achieved or the likelihood that they will be achieved for all project types. UNDEF's effectiveness should be assessed in accordance with the activities, outputs and outcomes planned in its projects as well as those detailed in the results framework enclosed in the UNDEF Programme Document. Factors contributing to and detracting from the results are to be included in the evaluation report.</b></p>			
4. To what extent have the objectives of UNDEF been achieved/are likely to be achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Effectiveness
5. To what extent have the objectives of the projects funded by UNDEF been achieved/are likely to be achieved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Effectiveness
6. What factors contributed to and/or influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the projects and UNDEF objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Effectiveness
7. Were there any (positive or negative) unintended consequences of UNDEFs work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Effectiveness
<p><b>C. To conduct an analysis and the evaluation of the overall performance of the Fund, of its outcomes, outputs in relation to the inputs, the financial management and of its projects.</b></p>			
8. Were/are the activities (including project selection, management, monitoring, etc) of UNDEF cost-efficient (in terms of staff resources, financial resources, etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Efficiency
9. Was/is UNDEF's governance structure the most appropriate for achieving cost-effective results, in relation to its mandate, and whether its set-up is?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Efficiency
10. How do these costs relate to the benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Efficiency
11. Were the objectives achieved on time and, if so, what facilitated this and if not, what hampered timely delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Efficiency
12. Was/were the projects implemented in the most cost efficient way compared to eventual alternatives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Efficiency
<p><b>D. An assessment of the impact that UNDEF has achieved and is likely to achieve in the future as a whole. E. This requires measuring the positive and negative effects produced or caused by UNDEF project on society or parts thereof while taking into account UNDEF'S uniqueness.</b></p>			
13. What were the short-, medium- and long-term impacts for and on UNDEF, (positive and negative)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Impact
14. What were the short-, medium- and long-term impacts for the selected CSOs and other relevant stakeholders (positive and negative)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Impact
15. To what extent did these impacts on CSOs make operations more effective and efficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary information</li> <li>- UNDEF Governance Structure</li> <li>- UNDEF personnel</li> <li>- Civil Society Organizations</li> <li>- beneficiaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Desk Review</li> <li>- Semi structured interview</li> <li>- Questionnaire</li> <li>- SWOT</li> <li>- Focal Group (cases studies)</li> </ul>	Impact

16. Were there any unintended results/consequences (positive or negative)?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Impact
17. If UNDEF had not existed, what would this mean for the UN System as a whole, and for support of CSOs specifically?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Impact
<b>F. The extent to which benefits or results from UNDEF projects will continue or are likely to continue after UNDEF's support has come to an end (i.e. the lasting results, changes in behaviour, possible follow-up projects) including an examination of the design and implementation of projects, whether this impacted on project results and if they can be sustained beyond project completion</b>			
18. To what extent will the benefits to the CSOs continue if/when donor support is withdrawn?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Sustainability
19. To what extent would the benefits of the projects continue if/when donor support is withdrawn?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Sustainability
20. What factors help/hinder the sustainability of the CSOs and the projects outputs and outcomes?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Sustainability
21. How sustainable is UNDEF as an entity? (Or something that gets at this question, too – and the presence or absence of regular budget funding – the constraints and benefits of having regular funding etc).	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Sustainability
<b>G. The extent to which the work of UNDEF is coherent with the United Nations' mandate and it's strategy and work at central level and in the field.</b>			
22. Was UNDEF consistent with and/or complementary to the programmes/projects/activities of other UN system entities and non-UN system entities?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Coherence
23. Were linkages made with other efforts across the UN system as and where appropriate?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Coherence
24. Is UNDEF as a whole coherent with the UN system and with other actors working in the field of democratization?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Coherence
25. Does UNDEF encourage CSO collaboration and coherence with the government?	- Secondary information - UNDEF Governance Structure - UNDEF personnel - Civil Society Organizations - beneficiaries	- Desk Review - Semi structured interview - Questionnaire - SWOT - Focal Group (cases studies)	Coherence

### 3.8 Project selection criteria

A total of 635 projects have been funded so far by UNDEF. This evaluation will look at: all 635 projects in the broad analysis, to be assessed using an on-line questionnaire; 50 projects to be assessed as part of a desk-based analysis, complemented by on-line questionnaire; and visits to 8-10 countries covering a total of 10-20 projects, which will be the subject of indepth case studies. Projects will be selected on the basis of diversity, according to the below criteria (see Annex Two for the project selection):

- **Region:** Global, Africa, Asia and Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean; Europe: at least two projects to be selected from each region per round.

- **Project areas:** Community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government: at least one project area to be included in each round.
- **Amount awarded:** Ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000: At least two low, medium and high funded projects to be included in each round.
- **Project/grantee performance<sup>42</sup>:** Poor, satisfactory, above expectation (only relevant for Rounds 2 to 7): At least one poor, satisfactory and above expectations projects to be included in each round and, where possible, projects receiving less funds but ranked 'above expectations' and projects receiving the maximum funds but ranked as 'poor' as and where possible.
- **Round:** Rounds 3 to 8 will be the focus of this evaluation due to the fact that the UNDEF methodology for project selection was only solidified in its current form in Round 3, and because Round Nine was only just launched (and therefore there will be insufficient documentation for the desk-based study. The projects will be selected according to the below criteria/rationale relevant to the rounds (see the below table for a summary):
  - The **questionnaire phase** will include projects from Rounds 1 to Round 9, in order to provide some elements of comparison before and after the institutionalisation of the current methodology;
  - The **desk-study** will include projects from round 1 and 2, for the same above rationale;
  - \*The **case studies** will focus on Rounds 3 through to 8: two projects will be selected from each of the rounds 3 to 5, the focus being on sustainability and medium-term impact; a larger number of projects will be selected from Rounds 6 to 8 due to the likely availability of relevant stakeholders, including the relevant CSO staff, UN and non-UN partners and awareness of beneficiaries.
- **\*Number of projects:** For the purposes of the case studies, countries will be selected where there are at least two projects that have been funded due to resource constraints on travel on the one hand, and the desire to understand and compare the impacts of contextual dynamics on CSOs ability to implement and/or impact on the other.
- **\*Repeat projects:** Given the ability for CSOs to apply for repeat funds, two case studies will focus on projects that have received more than one round of funding.
- **\*Rapid response project:** At least one of the case studies will look at the rationale and dynamics of the newly introduced rapid response mechanism.

\*Only relevant to the case studies.

N.B An extensive table for the selection of the projects (50) and case studies can be viewed in the context of Annex Two. To be completed following discussion and agreement on the above criteria.

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<sup>42</sup> This designation is allocated on the basis of a combination of TRANSTEC, UNDP and UNDEF staff evaluations.

**Table Two: Overview of case selection numbers and criteria**

Round	Projects selected	Questionnaire	Desk-based study	Case study	Additional criteria for case studies
1	125	All	12		
2	86	All	12		
3	69	All	12	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countries with &gt;2 projects</li> <li>• 2 “repeat” projects.</li> <li>• 1 rapid response project</li> </ul>
4	64	All	12	2	
5	64	All	12	2	
6	73	All	12	4	
7	48	All	14	4	
8	53	All	14	6	
9	52	All			
Total	635	635	100	20	

#### 4. Timetable for Evaluation

The below timetable for the evaluation has been elaborated for consideration by UNDEF. The timeframe for the completion of the evaluation is six months, leaving one to two months for a consideration of the project by SIDA and UNDEF representatives on how to incorporate the findings, with the assistance and support of the evaluators.

The below timetable, therefore divides the project into five clear phases: first, a design phase; second, a data-collection phase; third, a data analysis and write up phase; fourth, a review phase; and, fifth, a presentation/guidance on implementation phase. As detailed in the TOR, the total numbers of days for the finalisation of this evaluation will be 150 days, split evenly between two consultants.

It should be noted that due to time constraints, the following allocation of days is based on the assumption that UNDEF will provide support with:

- Scheduling meetings with key stakeholders in New York (list to be provided by the consultants shortly);
- Scheduling of meetings with key stakeholders (CSOs, beneficiaries and key partners) in the field;
- Assistance with sending out the email questionnaire to a) 600+ CSOs; and b) the 100 CSOs selected for closer analysis.
- Logistics, including flights bookings and hotel reservations, and local transportation needs.

It should also be noted that, due to the fact that inputs are required on the criteria for project selection, the case studies have yet to be selected; at the moment, the day allocation indicated below is based on:

- Four days in each of the five countries/per consultant.
- An assumption of two projects per country, thereby leaving two days for analysis for each project including engagements with CSOs, beneficiaries and partners.
- \*\*\*Does **not** include travel to and from the location: due to the time constraints of the evaluation, the consultants assume that they will not be paid for travel days, but that DSA will be provided. Consequently, the final allocation of days of travel will be calculated following the selection of the case studies and flight reservations.

**Table Three: Overview of proposed timeframe for evaluation**

Step	Task	Description	Location	No. days/ consultant	Timeframe
<b>Phase One: Evaluation design</b>					
1.	<b>Methodology design</b>	Desk review of UNDEF materials; elaboration of methodology and interview frameworks.	Desk-based	8	11 April-26 April
2.	<b>Review</b>	Submission of methodology; UNDEF review of methodology and incorporation of feedback.	Desk-based	.5	<b>28 April</b>
3.	<b>Case selection</b>	Selection of case studies (100 for desk review and 20 for field visit).	Desk-based	1	29 April
4.	<b>On-line questionnaire</b>	Design/upload of on-line questionnaire for all 600+ projects.	Desk-based	0.5	3 May
<b>Phase Two: Data-gathering</b>					
4.	<b>Desk review/ analysis</b>	Review of 100 projects documents, evaluations and assessments.	Desk-based	18	4 May-17 June
6.	<b>Preparation for stakeholder engagement</b>	Preparation for meetings. .	Desk-based	1	20 June-24 June
7.	<b>New York visit</b>	Engagement with UNDEF staff (focus groups on: theory of change and assumptions; framework for success; SWOT); Advisory Board; Consultative Committee and other relevant stakeholders.	New York	5	27 June-1 July
8.	<b>Preparation for field visits</b>	Preparation for field visits.	Desk-based	2	4-8 July
9.	<b>Field visits</b>	Visits to ten selected countries to conduct case studies on 20 projects.	Locations TBD	20***	11-30 July
<b>Phase Three: Data analysis and write-up</b>					
9.	<b>Analysis</b>	Review of all findings, triangulation and analysis; elaboration of major findings and recommendations.	Desk-based	10	1 August-19 August
10.	<b>Report-writing</b>	Write up of methodology, analysis, case studies, findings and recommendations.	Desk-based	5	22 august-2 September
11.	<b>Submission of first draft</b>	NA.	NA	NA	<b>2 September</b>
<b>Phase Four: Report review</b>					
12.	<b>Review by UNDEF</b>	Internal review by UNDEF and relevant stakeholders	NA	NA	5-9 September
13.	<b>Discussion and incorporation of round one comments</b>	Discussion with UNDEF and other relevant stakeholders on report, findings and recommendations. Incorporation of feedback.		2	12 September-16 September
14.	<b>Second review by UNDEF</b>	Internal review by UNDEF and relevant stakeholders	NA	NA	19-23 September
15.	<b>Incorporation of round two comments</b>	Discussion with UNDEF on second round of comments and incorporation of feedback.		1	26 September-30 September
16.	<b>Submission of final report</b>	NA	NA	NA	<b>3 October</b>
<b>Phase Five: Presentation and next steps</b>					
17.	<b>Presentation/ Engagement with SIDA</b>	Presentation/engagement with SIDA and/or incorporation of comments.	TBD	0.5	TBD
18.	<b>Engagement with UNDEF</b>	Engagement with UNDEF concerning the implementation of best practices and lessons learnt.	TBD	TBD	TBD
<b>Total number of days per consultant</b>				<b>75</b>	
<b>Total number of days for completion of project</b>				<b>150</b>	

**Annex One: Interview Frameworks**

Criteria	Stakeholders (One on one semi-structured interviews – one hour)	CSO/projects (as a whole) online questionnaire	100 CSOs (online questionnaire)
<b>Relevance</b>	How would you define UNDEF's goals? What methods does it use to achieve these goals?		
	In your opinion, is UNDEF relevant? Why?	What do you think about UNDEF? A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Bad	How important is UNDEF to your organisation? a. Extremely important. B. Important. C. Not sure. D. Not very important. E. Not important at all. Explain.
	To what extent was it relevant when it begun and has that context, to your knowledge, changed?		What do/did you like most about UNDEF? (Provide three answers)
	What can UNDEF do to increase its relevance?		What do/did you like least about UNDEF? (Provide three answers)
	To what extent are the activity areas selected by UNDEF (community activism; rule of law and human rights; tools for knowledge; women's empowerment; youth engagement; media and freedom of information; and, strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government) relevant to democratisation? Are there other areas that might be more relevant?	UNDEF provided support to us in: a. Community activism; b. rule of law and human rights; c. tools for knowledge; d. women's empowerment; e. youth engagement; f. media and freedom of information; and, g. strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government.  Are these activity areas relevant to democratisation in your country? Yes/no. Are there other activity areas more relevant to democratisation in your country? Yes/no.	UNDEF provided support to us in: a. Community activism; b. rule of law and human rights; c. tools for knowledge; d. women's empowerment; e. youth engagement; f. media and freedom of information; and, g. strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government.  Are these activity areas relevant to democratisation in your country? Yes/no. Explain Are there other activity areas more relevant to democratisation in your country? Yes/no. Explain
<b>Effectiveness</b>	How would you articulate UNDEF's theory of change? To what extent do you think this theory is valid, efficient and holds true according to different contexts?	Does/did the support of UNDEF help you reach your goals as a CSOs? Yes/No.	Does/did the support of UNDEF help you reach your goals as a CSOs? Yes/No. Why/how?
	Do you think that UNDEF does/can achieve its goals? On what basis do you have this opinion?		UNDEF's guidance during the project design phase was: a. Absolutely essential b. Important. c. Adequate. D. Had no effective. E. Had a negative effect. Explain
	What factors enhance or inhibit UNDEF's ability to achieve its goals?		UNDEF's guidance during the implementation phase was: a. Absolutely essential b. Important. c. Adequate. D. Had

			no effective. E. Had a negative effect. Explain
	Are there any unintended consequences of UNDEFs work (positive or negative)?	Did the projects funded by UNDEF achieve their goals? Yes/No.	Did the projects funded by UNDEF achieve their goals? Yes/No. Why?
	What can UNDEF do to increase its effectiveness?		
	To what extent is the efficiency of UNDEF's work enhanced by i) The Advisory Board? ii) The Programme Consultative Group iii) Other actors? (Please precise).		How could UNDEF better support CSOs? (Three answers)
<b>Efficiency</b>	To what extent do you think that UNDEF is efficient? Why?		The support provided by UNDEF was: A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Very bad Explain
	To what extent do you think the resources UNDEF has (both financial and human) are adequate to achieve its mandate? Why?	The support provided by the staff at UNDEF is/was: A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Bad	
	Do you think that UNDEF works according to an acceptable timeframe? Why?	What do you think about the timing response of UNDEF? A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Bad	Does UNDEF respond in a timely manner to your requirements? A. Always b. Sometimes. C. Rarely. D. Never. Explain.
	Do you think that the cost of UNDEF is adequate to the benefit it provides? Why?		The amount dispersed for the implementation of the project was: More than we needed. Adequate. Insufficient Explain
	Is it UNDEF expensive compared to other alternatives? Please explain.		
	What can UNDEF do to increase its efficiency?		
<b>Impact</b>	What is the impact of UNDEF's work on i) civil society organisations? ii) Democracy? iii) other? (please precise)		To what extent did your project positively contribute to the project activity area? It was critical. It made an important contribution. It helped. It did not contribute. It detracted from the topic/made a negative contribution. Explain
	What impacts do you foresee for UNDEF's work?	Did UNDEF support have a positive, neutral or negative impact on your CSO? Positive/neutral/negative.	Did UNDEF support have a positive, neutral or negative impact on your CSO? Positive/neutral/negative. Explain

	Are there any unintended consequences (positive or negative) of UNDEF's work?		Were there any (positive or negative) consequences during and after the implementation of the project? Yes/no. Explain
	If UNDEF had not existed, what would this mean for the UN System as a whole, for support to CSOs specifically and for democratisation?	Do you believe that the project funded by UNDEF contributed to democratisation in your country? Yes . Not sure No	To what extent do you think your work influences democratisation processes? It is critical. It is influential. It has some effect. It has no effect. It has a negative effect
	What can UNDEF do to increase its impact?	Could you have implemented your project without receiving funds from UNDEF? Yes/no.	Could you have implemented your project without receiving funds from UNDEF? Yes/no.
	How does UNDEF measure impact? How could this be improved?		
			How else would/could you have funded this project?
<b>Sustainability</b>	To what extent do you think that the benefits of UNDEF's support to CSOs (and democratisation) continue after the ending of the projects? How?		When the UNDEF funding ends, our project will: Continue with funding from other sources. Be handed over to another entity. Will cease to exist.
	How is UNDEF financed? How does it secure these funds? To what extent is this sustainable?	Is the project initially funded by UNDEF still functioning? Yes/No Explain	What are the risks of sustainability of your project? Three major risks.
	Do you think that UNDEF, as a UN entity supporting democratisation, is sustainable?	Is your organization still active? Yes/No.	Is your organization still active? Yes/No. Explain.
	What can UNDEF do to increase its sustainability?		What can UNDEF do to increase sustainability of your CSOs and the project?
<b>Coherence (and comparative advantage)</b>	To what extent is there a difference between the philosophy of UNDEF and the rest of the UN system?	How does UNDEF compare to other organisations working on democratisation? Much better Better Same Not as good Much worse	How does UNDEF compare to other organisations working on democratisation? Much better Better Same Not as good Much worse Explain
	Do you think that UNDEF contributes to the work of UN? Why/how?		To what extent does your project build upon and compliment the work of others?
	To what extent is there coherence and coordination between UNDEF and i) the rest of the UN system at HQ ii) the rest of the UN system at field level and iii) other entities working to enhance democratisation?	To what extent do you think the support provided by UNDEF was aligned with the work of other international actors in country? Extremely aligned Aligned Not sure Not aligned	To what extent do you think the support provided by UNDEF was aligned with the work of other international actors in country? Extremely aligned Aligned Not sure Not aligned Completely misaligned

	How is this achieved?	Completely misaligned	Explain?
	What can UNDEF do to increase its coherence?	What do you think about the work of UN in your country? A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Bad	What do you think about the work of UN in your country? A. Excellent, B. Good, C. sufficient, D. Could be improved, E. Bad Explain?
			Do you think that UNDEF is coherent with the work of UN?
<b>General questions</b>	What is democracy?		What is democracy?
	What is the most important attribute of UNDEF?		What is the most important thing in the support of UNDEF?
	What are the strength, weakness, opportunities and risks of UNDEF?		What are the strength, weakness, opportunities and risks of UNDEF?
	What are the strength, weakness, opportunities and risks of democracy around the world?		What are the strength, weakness, opportunities and risks of democracy?
	How can UNDEF improve in order to help democracy?		How can UNDEF help you to improve democracy?
	Can you summarise in one word (only one word) what do you think of UNDEF?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think of UNDEF?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think of UNDEF?
	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what you think of UNDEF's work?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think of the work of UNDEF?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think of the work of UNDEF?
	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about democracy?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about democracy?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about democracy?
	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about civil society?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about civil society?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about civil society?
	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about the UNDEF's role within UN system/compared to other UN actors?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about UNDEF's role within the UN system/compared to other UN actors?	Can you resume in one word (only one word) what do you think about UNDEF's role within the UN system/compared to other UN actors?

**Annex Two: Selection of projects (to be completed following discussion with UNDEF)**

		Criteria for selection of 100 projects for desk-based study				
		Project No./ country	Region	Project area	Amount	Performance
<b>Round One 2006</b>	1	046 Global	Global	Tools for knowledge	349,160	NA
	2	049 Global	Global	Community activism	267,458	NA
	3	103 Rwanda	Africa	Rule of law HR	350,000	NA
	4	076 Liberia	Africa	Youth engagement	120,000	NA
	5	001 Afghanistan	Asia/Pacific	Rule of law HR	336,567	NA
	6	112 Tajikistan	Asia/Pacific	Media and Freedom info	180,875	NA
	7	083 Morocco	Arab States	Women empowerment	350,000	NA
	8	093 Palestine	Arab States	Youth	269,311	NA
	9	065 Israel	Europe	Community activism	349,540	NA
	10	024 Bulgaria	Europe	Interaction w/govt	113,086	NA
	11	020 Bolivia	Latin/Caribbean	Interaction w/govt	333,060	NA
	12	096 Paraguay	Latin/Caribbean	Women empower	273,000	NA
<b>Round Two 2007</b>	13	126 Global	Global	Community activism	400,000	NA
	14	128 Global	Global	Media and freedom inf	200,000	Above expectation
	15	151 Niger	Africa	Rule of law HR	100,000	Poor
	16	141 DRC	Africa	Community activism	325,000	Satisfactory
	17	180 Myanmar	Asia/Pacific	Youth engagement	300,000	Above expectation
	18	185 Thailand	Asia/Pacific	Youth engagement	400,000	Poor
	19	162 Egypt	Arab States	Community activism	350,000	Poor
	20	165 Lebanon	Arab States	Youth engagement	200,000	Satisfactory
	21	191 Bosnia/Herzegov	Europe	Rule of law HR	150,000	Above expectation
	22	197 Turkey	Europe	Women empower	350,000	Satisfactory
	23	201 Argentina	Latin/Caribbean	Interaction w/govt	100,000	Above expectation
	24	204 Ecuador	Latin/Caribbean	Youth engagement	350,000	Poor
<b>Round Three 2008</b>	25	214 Global	Global	Community activism	400,000	Satisfactory
	26	213	Global	Tools for	220000	Satisfactory

		Global		knowledge		
	27	227 Ethiopia	Africa	Rule of law HR	400,000	Poor
	28	221 Burkina Faso	Africa	Youth engagement	150,000	Satisfactory
	29	255 Iran	Asia/Pacific	Community activism	300,000	Poor
	30	256 Kazakhstan	Asia/Pacific	Rule of law HR	175,000	Satisfactory
	31	244 Lebanon	Arab States	Youth engagement	375,000	Above expectation
	32	242 Iraq	Arab States	Women empower	150,000	Satisfactory
	33	264 Albania	Europe	Media and freedom info	180,000	Satisfactory
	34	268 Turkey	Europe	Interaction w/govt	230,000	Satisfactory
	35	273 Chile	Latin/Cari bb	Community activism	250,000	Above expectation
	36	276 Guatemala	Latin/Cari bb	Youth engagement	300,000	Satisfactory
<b>Round Four 2009</b>	37	282 Global	Global	Rule of law HR	400,000	Satisfactory
	38	281 Global	Global	Community activism	325,000	Satisfactory
	39	286 Angola	Africa	Women empower	325,000	Poor
	40	303 Rwanda	Africa	Rule of law HR	60,000	Above expectation
	41	325 Kazakhstan	Asia/Pacific	Youth engagement	200,000	Above expectation
	42	323 Indonesia	Asia/Pacific	Community activism	225,000	Poor
	43	307 Algeria	Arab States	Women empower	175,000	Poor
	44	Palestine 311	Arab States	Youth engagement	325,000	Above expectation
	45	353 Georgia	Europe	Rule of law HR	165,000	Satisfactory
	46	332 Russian Fed	Europe	Interaction w/govt	225,000	Satisfactory
	47	344 Peru	Latin/Cari bb	Media and freedom info	150,000	Poor
	48	341 Colombia	Latin/Cari bb	Tools for knowledge	180,000	Satisfactory
<b>Round Five 2010</b>	49	345 Global	Global	Rule of law HR	175,000	Poor
	50	346 Global	Global	Women empower	300,000	Satisfactory
	51	368 Zimbabwe	Africa	Women empower	200,000	Poor
	52	355 Guinea	Africa	Interaction w gov't	200,000	Satisfactory
	53	382 India	Asia/Pacific	Women empower	225,000	Satisfactory
	54	384 Kyrgyzstan	Asia/Pacific	Community activism	225,000	Above expectation
	55	366 Sudan	Arab States	Women empower	325,000	Satisfactory

	56	375 Lebanon	Arab States	Interaction w/govt	200,000	Poor
	57	396 Georgia	Europe	Media Freedom info	175,000	Above expectation
	58	399 Serbia	Europe	Women empowerment	125,000	Satisfactory
	59	406 Haiti	Latin/Cari bb	Youth engagement	225,000	Poor
	60	408 Paraguay	Latin/Cari bb	Women empower	200,000	Satisfactory
<b>Round Six</b>	61	409 Global	Global	Community activism	225,000	Satisfactory
	62	410 Global	Global	Community activism	275,000	Poor
	63	421 Madagascar	Africa	Women empower	250,000	Satisfactory
	64	426 Sierra Leone	Africa	Interaction w/govt	135,000	Satisfactory
	65	462 Tonga	Asia/Pacifi c	Women empower	60,000	Poor
	66	459 Sri Lanka	Asia/Pacifi c	Youth engagement	225000	Satisfactory
	67	442 Tunisia	Arab States	Community activism	80,000	Above expectation
	68	437 Egypt	Arab States	Women empowerment	225,000	NA
	69	466 Azerbaijan	Europe	Youth engagement	225,000	Satisfactory
	70	471 Russian F'	Europe	Community activism	170,000	Satisfactory
	71	474 Dominican Republic	Latin/Cari bb	Youth engagement	250,000	Satisfactory
	72	476 Guatemala	Latin/Cari bb	Youth engagement	225,000	Above expectation
<b>Round Seven (2012)</b>	73	483 Global	Global	Media and freedom info	90,000	NA
	74	482 Global	Global	Rule of law HR	200,000	Poor
	75	487 Cape Verde	Africa	Tools for knowledge	200,000	Satisfactory
	76	497 South Sudan	Africa	Media and freedom info	250,000	NA
	77	513 Maldives	Asia/Pacifi c	Women empower	150,000	NA
	78	517 Turkmenista n	Asia/Pacifi c	Community activism	225,000	NA
	79	505 Somalia	Arab States	Women empowerment	180,000	NA
	80	502 Morocco	Arab States	Rue of law HR	150,000	NA
	81	521 Armenia	Europe	Rule of law HR	200,000	NA
	82	524 Ukraine	Europe	Rule of law HR	200,000	NA
	83	526 Ecuador	Latin/Cari bb	Youth engagement	225,000	NA
	84	527 El Salvador	Latin/Cari bb	Rule of law HR	203,500	NA

	85		REPEAT/ OR Regional Project	TBD		
	86		Rapid response/O R Regional Project	TBD		
<b>Round Eight 2013</b>	87	532 Global	Global <sup>43</sup>	Media and freedom info	200,000	NA
	88	Regional TBD	Regional TBD	Regional TBD	Regional TBD	
	89	456 Tanzania	Africa	Media and freedom info	200,000	NA
	90	542 Malawi	Africa	Youth engagement	175,000	NA
	91	562 Kyrgyzstan	Asia/Pacific	Media and freedom of info	225,000	NA
	92	564 Mongolia	Asia/Pacific	Tools for knowledge	225,000	NA
	93	551 Djibouti	Arab States	Community activism	175,000	NA
	94	555 Libya	Arab States	Media freedom info	110,000	NA
	95	573 Bosnia Herz	Europe	Youth engagement	200,000	NA
	96	575 Kosovo	Europe	Media and freedom info	200,000	NA
	97	579 Colombia	Latin/Cari bb	Media and freedom info	175,000	NA
	98	581 Nicaragua	Latin/Cari bb	Tools for knowledge	175,00	NA
	99	Regional project TBD	Regional project TBD	Regional project TBD		NA
100	Regional project TBD	Regional project TBD	Regional project TBD			

<sup>43</sup> There is only one global project in this round.

### **Annex Three: Indicator Table**

The indicator table is one of two instruments that will be used to assess the projects selected for an indepth review (100 projects) during the evaluation (See Annex Four for the second “instrument”). It establishes a ranking of the projects based on the different criteria; each indicator has a specific value that is expressed as a percentage of the totality of indicators included in the table. As such, when an assessment is made (in the assessment column), the formula reflects the relative weight of the indicator, and will calculate and express its value in relation to the relevant sub-dimension/dimension – which is then reflected in the overall assessment of the project.

The indicator table allows for:

- i) An analysis based either on a specific sub-dimension and/or a dimension of analysis;
- ii) An overall assessment of a project and,
- iii) Facilitates a comparison among the universe of projects to be examined.

As an evaluation tool, therefore, it expresses both quantitative and qualitative data in a number that can express a ranking compared to the other projects; in this manner, it allows for an identification of how every indicator is reflected in a global assessment and, therefore, allows a general view of each of the projects analyzed.

It can also be used as a risk management tool as it can detect which projects (and in which dimensions/sub-dimension) will need support to improve and, in this manner, contribute to the overall management of the projects. A copy of the table is inserted below, however an excel version is also provided in order to allow for a better understanding of the functionality of the table (since the relative weightings only work in excel not word). NB. The model proposed will need to be discussed with UNDEF in order to validate the indicators included and define their specific weight.

Project title:

Beneficiary/implementer:

Assessment based on indicators' table

Budget:

Area of intervention:

Country:

Region:

Level (local, regional or national):

Objective:

Evaluation implemented:

100.00

Dimension	Sub Dimension	Component (Indicator)	Description of the component	assessment *	Relative value	TOTAL
<b>Relevance, Design and Coherence (40%)</b>	<b>Relevance of the initiative (50%)</b>	<i>In relation to the mandate of UNDEF</i>	The degree of coherence within the contents of the project and the areas of intervention of UNDEF	1.00	0.30	<b>0.30</b>
		<i>In relation to the strengthening of the CSO</i>	Degree of coherence of the project with the strengthening of the CSO	1.00	0.30	<b>0.30</b>
		<i>In relation to National Context</i>	Degree of coherence with the social and political situation in the country	1.00	0.40	<b>0.40</b>
	Sub-dimension relevance		<b>Assessment sub-dimension relevance</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension relevance</b>	<b>50.00</b>
	<b>Design of the Proposal and coherence (50%)</b>	<i>Quality of proposal</i>	The overall quality of the proposal	1.00	0.15	<b>0.15</b>
		<i>Quality of the contents included</i>	The contents of the project are innovative	1.00	0.30	<b>0.30</b>
		<i>Coherence of the initiative</i>	The degree of coherence of the initiative with regard to democracy	1.00	0.40	<b>0.40</b>
		<i>Coherence with the UN system</i>	The degree of coherence of the initiative with regards to the UN system's UNDAF in the country	1.00	0.15	<b>0.15</b>
	Sub-dimension design of the proposal and coherence		<b>Assessment sub-dimension Proposal and coherence</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension design of the proposal</b>	<b>50.00</b>
	<b>Assessment dimension design, coherence and relevance</b>				<b>100.00</b>	<b>Sub total Design and Relevance</b>
<b>Implementation (30%)</b>	<b>Efficiency (25%)</b>	<b>outputs achieved with planned funds</b>	The output were achieved with the resources available	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
		<b>outputs achieved in time framework</b>	The outputs were achieved in the planned time framework	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
	Sub-dimension efficiency		<b>Assessment sub-dimension efficiency</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension efficiency</b>	<b>25.00</b>
	<b>Effectiveness (25%)</b>	<b>Outputs achievement</b>	The degree of outputs achieved	1.00	0.25	<b>0.25</b>
		<b>Outcomes achievement</b>	The degree of outcomes achieved	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>

		<b>Impact achievement</b>	The degree of impact achieved	1.00	0.25	<b>0.25</b>	
	<b>Sub-dimension effectiveness</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension effectiveness</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension effectiveness</b>	<b>25.00</b>	
<b>Coherence (25%)</b>	<b>Collaboration with other CSOs and UN agencies</b>		The degree of collaboration with other CSOs or UN agencies	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>	
	<b>Collaboration with the government</b>		The degree of collaboration with the government	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>	
	<b>Sub-dimension coherence</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension coherence</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension coherence</b>	<b>25.00</b>	
<b>Quality of Report (25%)</b>	<b>Quality of the reports</b>		The degree of quality of the implementation reports	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>	
	<b>Quality of financial implementation</b>		The degree of quality of the budgetary report	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>	
	<b>Sub-dimension quality of report</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension quality of reports</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension quality of reports</b>	<b>25.00</b>	
<b>Assessment dimension Implementation</b>				<b>100.00</b>	<b>Sub total dimension implementation</b>	<b>30.00</b>	
<b>Sustainability (30%)</b>	<b>Projects' sustainability (50%)</b>	<b>outputs sustainability</b>		The outputs achieved outlasted the project implementation	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
		<b>outcomes sustainability</b>		The outcomes outlasted the project implementation	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
	<b>Sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension deliverable's sustainability</b>	<b>50.00</b>	
	<b>Civil society organization's sustainability (50%)</b>	<b>CSO' sustainability after UNDEF</b>		The CSO is still active after the project	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
		<b>Ability to obtain other funds</b>		The CSO has achieved other funds to maintain presence and themes	1.00	0.50	<b>0.50</b>
	<b>Sub-dimension CSO' sustainability</b>		<b>Assessment sub-dimension CSO sustainability</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>% assessment sub-dimension CSO' sustainability</b>	<b>50.00</b>	
<b>Assessment dimension sustainability</b>				<b>100.00</b>	<b>Sub total dimension sustainability</b>	<b>30.00</b>	

\* not achieved=0.20; Need to improve=0.40; Acceptable=0.60; Good=0.80; Excellent=1

<b>Criteria</b>		
Excellent	1	The project shows to be relevant, efficient, effective, coherent and sustainable beyond expectations
Good	0.80	The project shows to be a good project in all the criteria examined
Acceptable	0.60	The project is acceptable and some of the criteria of evaluation are not satisfactory
Not acceptable	0.40	The project present some limitations in various criteria examined
Strong limitations	0.20	The project is not acceptable in the majority of the criteria examined

**Annex Four: Qualitative assessment table for 100 projects\***

<b>Project title:</b>						
<b>Notable CSO attributes</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Significant achievements?</b>	<b>Significant concerns?</b>	<b>Evaluation compared with indicator table?</b>	<b>Lessons learned</b>

\*To be completed alongside the indicator table for each project (See Annex Three)

## Annex 7: Stakeholders engaged with for this evaluation

Persons interviewed – New York - 37		
Name	Charge	Organization
<b>UN System - 21</b>		
Annika Savill	Executive Head	UNDEF
Hannah Davies	Deputy Head, Policy and Management	UNDEF
Mikiko Sawanishi	Deputy Head, Programmes	UNDEF
Christian Lamarre	Programme Officer	UNDEF
Hannah McGlue	Programme Officer	UNDEF
Teresa Benito	Programme Officer	UNDEF
Beth Baja	Senior Programme Assistant	UNDEF
Brian Connolly	Programme Assistant	UNDEF
Diego Firpo	UNDEF CSO Board Member	TECHO
Ann De La Roche	Officer in Charge and Chief of Operations	UN Office for Partnerships
Aracely Santana	Chair	UNDEF Advisory Board
Julie Ballington	PCG member	UN Women
Marta Val	PCG member	UN Women
Sharon O'Brien	PCG Member	UN Department of Political Affairs
Simone Monasebian	PCG Member	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
Adriana de la Espriella	PCG Member	UN Rule of Law Unit
Amin Mohsen	PCG Member	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Aleida Ferreyra	PCG Member	UN Development Programme
David Marshall	PCG Member	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
David Nabarro	Special Advisor for the 2030 agenda	Executive Office of the Secretary-General
Dawda Jobarteh		Executive Office of the Secretary-General
<b>Member States / Donors - 15</b>		
Sonali Samarasinghe	Minister Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN
Pawel Radomski	Deputy Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of Poland to the UN
Larbi Djacta	Minister Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Algeria to the UN
Keith Hamilton Llewellyn Marshall	Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of Barbados to the UN
Peter Selepec	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the UN
Diana Rengifo	Second Secretary	Permanent Mission of Colombia to the UN
Matthew Miller	Advisor	Permanent Mission of United States to the UN
Janina Hasse-Mohsine	Second Secretary	Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN
Sarah Mendelson	ECOSOC Representative	Permanent Mission of United States to the UN
Yumi Omiya	Advisor	Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN
Tanmaya Lal	Deputy Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of India to the UN
Manjunath Chenneerappa	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of India to the UN
Nasrin Pourghazian	Country Programme Coordinator	SIDA
Sigrun Rawet	Minister Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN
Teresa Carlsson-Szlezak	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the UN
<b>Others - 1</b>		
Dieter Wagner	Project Monitoring and Evaluation Expert	Transtec New York

Persons interviewed during the case studies	Grantee	Ultimate Beneficiaries
Colombia - UDF-13-579-COL and UDF-09-341-COL	5	6
Guatemala - UDF-11-476-GUA	2	11
Guatemala - UDF-12-528-GUA	3	29 (3-26)
Moldova - UDF-10-397-MOL	3	9
Moldova - UDF -11-469-MOL	4	6
Georgia - UDF-11-467-GEO	2	6
Georgia - UDF-09-333-GEO	2	
Georgia – UDF-07-520-GEO	2	
Sri Lanka - UDF-11-459-SRL -	2	
Sri Lanka - UDF -13-571-SRL	7	33 (3-30)
Rwanda – UDF-12-495-RWA	8 (+5 partners)	22
Rwanda – UDF-11-430-RWA	10	21
Liberia – UDF-09-298-LIR	12	24
Liberia – UDF-12-491-LIR	3	26
Lebanon – UDF-11-438-LEB	3	19
Jordan – UDF-10-373-JOR	3 (+2 partners)	8
Jordan – UDF-11-434-RAS	4 (+1 partner)	16
Laos –UDF-10-385-LAO	2	7
Laos – UDF-11-453-LAO	2 (+2 partners)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>251</b>

**Evaluation of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)  
2006-2016  
Case Study Supplement**

**September 2016**

**Independent Consultants/Senior Evaluators  
Andrea Calvaruso and Josie Lianna Kaye**

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15. Case Study Fifteen: Promoting the application of alternative, non-custodial sanctions in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (UDF-07-520-GEO)
16. Case study Sixteen - Participatory Rights of the Physically Disabled Persons in Georgia (UDF-09-333-GEO)

***V. Latin America and Caribbean***

17. Case Study Seventeen: Civic Participation of Indigenous Youth for the Strengthening of Democracy (UDF-11-476-GUA).
18. Case Study eighteen: Access to Justice for the Maya Q'eqchi' in Guatemala by Rebuilding Traditional Forms of Organization (UDF-12-528-GUA)
19. Case studies Nineteen and Twenty: Strengthening Democracy through Freedom of Expression and Peace Agenda for Journalists in Colombia and Monitoring freedom of expression and democracy in Colombia (UDF-13-579-COL and UDF-09-341-COL)

## **I. Africa**

### **1. Case Study One: Empowering persons with disabilities in Rwanda (UDF-12-495-RWA)**

*Overview: Umbrella of organizations of persons with disabilities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for health promotion (UPHLS)*

The Umbrella of organizations of persons with disabilities in the fight against HIV/AIDS and for health promotion (UPHLS) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) promoting the rights and fostering the inclusion of people with disabilities. Founded in 2006, the organization focuses on capacity-building, advocacy, policy-making, programming and monitoring and evaluation, and brings together diverse NGOs representing people with physical, sensory, mental and/or intellectual impairments. UPHLS was awarded \$250,000 by UNDEF in 2012 for a two-year project entitled ‘Empowering persons with disabilities in Rwanda’.

The project was designed to address the discrimination faced by people with disabilities (PWDs) in Rwanda; PWDs have not only been left out of development policies in the country, but tend to be overrepresented among poor people as a result of their impairments, the lack of a conducive environment to support them, and due to the pervasive stigma attached to PWDs in Rwanda. While the UN Convention on Rights of PWDs was ratified in 2008, little effort was made to implement it. Consequently, PWDs still have limited access to basic services such as health, education, employment, microcredit and rehabilitation, for example. This situation is reinforced by pervasive myths about PWDs, and the fact that their participation in community, social and development programs is limited, and non-existent in many cases. The project, therefore, aimed to improve the situation of PWDs through diverse activities, including: training programmes for PWDs and representatives in health/social service sectors; advocacy and lobbying; support the development of PWDs’ self-help groups; study tour to Kenya; inclusive sports and other community integration activities; as well as media campaigns.

*UNDEF collaboration with UPHLS*

UPHLS appreciated the open, collaborative and responsive nature of the collaboration with UNDEF; while some donors “simply allocate funds, UNDEF assisted also through the implementation phase, right through to close out”, UPHLS underscored. While communications with UNDEF were predominantly on-line or via phone, UNDP assisted milestone events on their behalf, and often also provided assistance and guidance where necessary. UPHLS appreciated the freedom they were given to implement the project but emphasised that UNDEF support was available as and when needed upon request; this support became evident when changes needed to be made, for example, in the context of budget re-allocation. UNDEF requested details in order to ensure the changes kept the organization in-line with their objective, but was flexible in its approach to such changes and demonstrated a high level of trust in the ability of the UPHLS to deliver on its objectives.

UPHLS found the process for revising the project document extremely rigorous; it took between six and eight months to complete the revision. According to UPHLS, it improved their way of thinking about and planning for the project; they understood through

their interaction with UNDEF that the link between the objectives and activities were not consistently clear. It was also evident that UPHLS thinking was highly contextualised and tailored to Rwandan realities, and that these specificities had to be clarified and expanded upon in order to generate a shared understanding of the project with UNDEF. UPHLS underlined that UNDEF respected and did not try to change their way of thinking, but made sure that their assumptions were clear, and that their impact would be measurable. UPHLS has used the RBM methodology for other fundraising activities, and is also using it to guide their strategic planning process for the whole organization, which is currently underway. Furthermore, support of the UN gave a greater, more visible voice for the organization to use to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities; it was a “huge boost of confidence” for the organization, which helped them to build a bridge with the government concerning their responsibilities under the UN Convention. Support from UNDEF appears to be positively influencing the relationship between UPHLS in-country with other UN entities, and the organization now hopes to receive funding from other UN entities.

Lastly, the project was managed in close consultation with a steering committee made up of member organisations representing people with different forms of disabilities and government institutions; this was a new way of working for UPHLS, but one which has proven to be extremely effective. By working in this manner, UPHLS was able to learn from member organisations and to improve effectiveness when working with different PWD-groups; furthermore, it helped avoid duplication of efforts and greater attention to gaps. Consequently, collaboration between member organizations has been strengthened, with impacts on the way they work together in the context of other projects. By working through the operational challenges they encountered during the implementation of the UNDEF project, they learnt how such projects could be managed more smoothly in future iterations. It was an important learning process for all involved; the organization regrets, however, that the project was so short – making it difficult to incorporate time and mind space to really reflect on the project, ensure sustainability and how elements of it could be improved.

#### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The project had diverse and highly tangible impacts, the majority of which were felt directly by PWDs themselves. There is significant social stigma attached to people living with disabilities to such an extent that parents are often ashamed of their children and keep them isolated from society. On the one hand, since PWDs are not considered to be ‘real citizens’, they are also not deemed worthy of ‘normal’ rights, such as access to education, social services nor normal participation in community life; conversely, one focus group feared that since they PWDs do not believe they are real citizens that some may also perceive themselves to be ‘above the law’ and able to commit crimes without fear of punishment (NB. The belief that they can do so, does not mean that they do commit crimes, but the sentiment underscores the extent to which they perceive themselves to be “non-citizens”).

The PWDs engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation had internalised these discourses and felt that they were not full human beings. The training revolutionised their self-perception: “it was like a key that opened in my mind” reported one beneficiary. Through the training, they were able to appreciate their own self-worth and engage in advocacy activities to demand their rights. The impact of the programme multiplied for women with disabilities who experience a double form of discrimination and who are even extremely vulnerable to sexual violence. One woman stated: “I know now that I can plan my own future and that I don't need to get pregnant because someone orders me to do so; I feel

free”. Support from the UN was a boost to the self-esteem of those involved as they felt recognised by an international entity “that cared for them”.

Debates organised by UPHLS helped sensitise communities to the specific needs of PWDs, and to transform the way they are perceived within the community. PWDs and representatives of local authorities sat together in public forums; this was an opportunity for local authorities to see and hear first-hand from PWDs about the challenges they face in their day to day lives; it was also an opportunity for PWDs to express their feelings and to feel heard – many for the first time in their lives. Journalists who were trained as part of the programme also learned how to appropriately refer to PWDs and how to ensure the discourse around them is constructive and not offensive – as has often been the case in the past, thereby perpetuating stigma and discrimination. Through these meetings at the local level, therefore, small changes began to be made: local leaders had ramps fitted to buildings; local police, teachers and health workers understood the specific challenges faced by PWDs and how they could better support them in order to ensure their rights are protected; and journalists understood the importance of ‘social labelling’ and of referring to PWDs in a respectful and ‘humanizing’ manner; journalists also understood the importance of covering stories related to PWDs and there has been a notable increase in coverage of these issues. The mind-set change amongst local populations was enhanced by engagements on radio stations and community events, such as sports activities, aiming to better integrate PWDs into community life.

There were other tangible effects – both for those directly involved in the campaign – due to the extensive communication strategy elaborated by UPHLS– also beyond. For example, those engaged in the programme were trained to strengthen pre-existing self-help groups on the one hand and cooperatives on the other. Some cooperatives even received district-level support, which was used to buy land and to create micro-credit systems to allow others to start up small businesses. Beyond those directly involved, radio programmes help to inform parents, for example, of the rights of their children with disabilities; many would then call into programmes to ask advice on schools that would cater to the needs of their children, and were able to find appropriate places to send them. Using the radio, the Government – led by the Director of Social Affairs in targeted districts - also led a campaign to instruct the broader population, beyond journalists, to also use respectful language when speaking about PWDs, whereas before they were referred to either using insults or using the specific disability of the person as a ‘label’ or a name. Furthermore, UPHLS compiled the laws relevant to the PWDs and demand for this document far exceeded expectations. What is striking about this project is two-fold: first, despite the law protecting the rights of PWDs, many simply did not know about it. Secondly, lack of government activity in this area does not appear to be the result of a lack of will, but simply a lack of knowledge. Those exposed to the training and communication activities of the project have quickly become sincere advocates.

### *Sustainability issues*

Those engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation emphasised that the knowledge and skills – and desire to advocate for PWDs - acquired have not disappeared; they will continue to use these skills as much as possible. UPHLS also made significant efforts to build upon existing structures in order to strengthen the sustainability of the project. However, beneficiaries and UPHLS alike fear that the momentum around this issue will be lost without continued efforts. Beneficiaries spoke of the “duty of the UN and UPHLS to

ensure the gains made so far are not lost”. The project was also only able to engage in around 277 out of 416 sectors, so much remains to be done. Disability is an intrinsically cross-cutting issue, and it is evident that the majority of the country’s laws and policies do not take the needs and rights of PWDs into account. UPHLS, for example, has been advocating on the part of PWDs in terms of national health policy; similar actions are required for the employment sector, gender issues, and so many more. While many people were impacted by this project, many continue to endure isolated lives in rural communities, unaware of their rights and excluded from engaging in community life or who believe their only hope for a better life is to engage in begging on the streets. There is deep concern that without UNDEF support, the project and this pressing issue will lose visibility and the ability to influence.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

This project opened the eyes of the evaluator to the critical needs of PWDs and the clear alignment between the goals of UNDEF and projects of this nature, not least as PWDs in many countries where UNDEF works are amongst the most marginalised populations. It will be critical to continue to support this project in particular in light of its successes, and the myriad activities that contributed meaningfully to the goal envisaged by UPHLS. In particular, it would be important to consolidate learning with follow up trainings in areas where the programme has already been implemented, while also rolling it to other, rural areas. In addition to the roll out of this pre-existing programme, a new programme that specifically targets all members of the executive and legislature, as well as opinion leaders would ensure that the impact of this project is irreversible.

Engagements with beneficiaries also highlight some other key learning: first, it can be challenging to empower someone to advocate for their rights when the person has critical socio-economic needs; the project, therefore, would benefit from focusing on how to lift PWDs out of poverty through engagement in the employment sector, training and entrepreneurship programmes. Second, this project highlighted the way in which some donor strategies can be counter-intuitive and miss opportunities to foster sustainability of CSOs: the majority of donors, for example, are unwilling to buy vehicles, support extensive staff costs or help CSOs to buy property for their offices. However, costs that go towards rent, car hire or expensive consultants during a two-year timeframe would have enabled the organization in question to either buy a vehicle or purchase an office space that would have lessened the burden for the years ahead and helped foster greater sustainability. Lastly, this organisation – like many funded by UNDEF – produced a wealth of booklets, training programmes and guidance materials which would undoubtedly be of benefit both to other UNDEF grantees but also to other CSOs more broadly. Creating a platform where such materials can be shared would be a cornerstone of emerging South-South cooperation.

## **2. Case Study Two: Des journalistes mediateurs entre les autorites locales, les OSC et les citoyens du Rwanda (UDF-11-430-RWA)**

### *Overview: Pax Press*

Pax Press (Association des journalistes Rwandais pour la Promotion de la Presse de la Paix et de la Reconciliation) is a Kigali-based network of over 85 journalists working with a wide range of media-related organizations, including 12 radio stations, 10 newspapers, 6 websites/blogs and 3 television stations. Formed in 2006, the organization promotes the professionalization of journalism and encourages a greater orientation on the part of journalists towards community-based reporting with a view to promoting peace, governance,

human rights and democracy in Rwanda. Pax Press was awarded \$100,000 by UNDEF in 2013 for a one-year project entitled, ‘Dialogue entre la Société civile et les autorités locales sur les politiques publiques au Rwanda’.

The project responded to a report written in 2010 by *L’Institut de Recherche pour la Démocratie et la Paix Durable (IRDP)* which found that 74% of Rwandans have never participated in the elaboration of policies that affect their lives, and that almost 90% have never or only very rarely been consulted by authorities – demonstrating the way in which the link between state and society in Rwanda is particularly weak. Consequently, the objective of this project was to ensure that citizens are better informed about political processes, and to foster dialogue between citizens, authorities and civil society on issues that affect the community on a day-to-day basis. The project consisted largely of: training journalists in both effective journalism and as facilitators; organizing community debates in 20 rural sectors around the country; and, diffusing information related to these debates and other issues of relevance to rural communities on the radio and diverse written formats.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with Pax Press*

Despite the brevity of this project, Pax Press believes that the collaboration with UNDEF had a significant impact on the organization – not least since very few donors are willing to engage with media associations in Rwanda due to the enduring negative perception that the media accrued as a result of their role in the genocide in 1994. On the rare occasions that donors are willing to support media associations– in Rwanda but also in other countries - there is a tendency to focus on ‘high politics’ and coverage of political parties, elections and other ‘top down’ processes. Support from UNDEF in the media domain, therefore, was a particularly welcome opportunity for Pax Press to demonstrate the impartial, professional and instrumental role of the media in fostering a more inclusive and democratic country from the ‘bottom up’.

Despite the lack of a permanent presence in Rwanda combined with the absence of visits on the part of UNDEF personnel during the course of the project, Pax Press found that digital communication was highly efficient and contributed to better-designed and better-implemented project. The Results-Based Management (RBM) approach used by UNDEF was new to Pax Press but the process of developing the logical framework helped them to refine and better understand the project with a level of precision they were not used to; it enabled them to fully comprehend the linkage between their activities and the objectives they hoped to achieve and it is a tool they now use when developing other projects, and one which they believe other CSOs in-country would greatly benefit from. While the project design process was highly rigorous, once completed they felt that a level of trust had been fostered between Pax Press and UNDEF, which then left them “free to work as we needed to in order to get the job done”.

As a result of the collaboration with UNDEF, Pax Press is now well-recognised for its work on community debates and media professionalization, stating that “suddenly everyone was speaking about us and our work”; the community debate is seen broadly as being a “brand” of Pax Press, one which has encouraged other organizations to use this same methodology for fostering participation and dialogue. As a result of UNDEF support, Pax Press received funds from the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) to work further on transparency and local accountability initiatives. Moreover, Pax Press has now achieved a government-awarded certificate which underscores its work in support of local populations. The professionalization of Pax Press journalists has also been recognised in the form of multiple formal agreements signed with other media organizations keen to participate in their

networks, and non-media CSOs who wish for their work to be promoted by Pax Press throughout the country.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The Pax Press way of working has had a profound effect on the journalists involved in the training programme: all those involved abide by the four principles of Pax Press: “dire sans nuire; denoncer sans condamner; montrer sans choquer; et, informer sans decourager”<sup>1</sup>. The project has helped to overcome two key obstacles to more effective and inclusive journalism: first, it has ensured that journalism is fact-based, rather than opinion based; and two, it helped ensure that journalism does not focus only on political-elite, Kigali-based dynamics, but includes the voices of rural and often-marginalised communities. Consequently, the project led to a significant ‘mind-set’ change amongst journalists who had been reticent to leave the capital, believing previously that “villagers don’t have opinions on political matters”. Journalists learnt that villagers not only have opinions on political matters, but good ideas that contribute to better governance and more efficient policies; journalists interviewed for this project confirmed that “thanks to this project we became interested in local stories”.

This enhanced awareness of the vital role of rural communities in fostering democratic processes and tailored policies contributed to the emergence of what Pax Press refers to as “citizen journalism”. Journalists are now keen to travel across the country, often to remote areas to cover issues and events that matter to communities living there on the one hand, and which are of relevance to national political processes on the other. Thanks to the UNDEF project, Pax Press was in a unique position to enable journalists to cover these stories, supporting travel and other associated costs to enable citizen journalism to flourish. Furthermore, journalistic professionalism was enhanced during the course of the project as a result of the creation of an on-line “constructive criticism” forum, whereby the members of the network submit articles/radio briefs for comment by other members in order to ensure the credibility of their work and to continue learning how to improve. This methodology created solidarity between journalists and a sense of comradeship to further this approach to covering rural issues.

For communities the debates have created vital spaces for dialogue and contributed to creating a greater “culture of dialogue”. Whereas authorities were reluctant at first to engage in community debates facilitated by journalists, once they had engaged in one they fully appreciated the value of the opportunity to exchange views and to be able to hear the views and ideas of rural communities; this reluctance was overcome by the non-confrontational, participatory approach fostered by journalists as a result of the Pax Press training. Spaces for dialogue were also fostered between rural and urban communities: as a result of the project local communities realised that journalists are not “an arm of the government” but are in fact there to serve everyone; consequently, local communities felt empowered to call journalists to come and report on stories or issues unfolding in their communities, but also to call into national radio stations in the context of live debates. Local communities were empowered to feel that their voices count and the issues that affect them matter just as much as the voices and issues emanating from Kigali. According to one village beneficiary: “the population woke up”.

The impact of this project, however, went beyond dialogue alone: it created meaningful change for local communities on a wide range of issues. In the context of a

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<sup>1</sup>Tell without destroying; denounce without condemning; show without shocking; and, inform without discouraging.

‘school-feeding programme’ initiated by the Government, for example, the opinions of local communities expressed during Pax Press debates led to significant changes in the way the programme was implemented, allowing greater flexibility for parents and children engaged in the programme. Furthermore, in the context of another debate held on “mutuelles de sante,” local populations were educated on the importance of enrolling in such programmes, increasing the rate of participation from 40% to almost 80%.<sup>2</sup> This increased rate was also the result of changes to the way money was collected, from one lump annually - which few rural community members could afford to do - towards an incremental monthly payment system which was much more manageable for poorer populations. Another debate was held on drug consumption and criminality, on the rise as a result of trafficking from Uganda; those engaged in these activities were made to understand the negative impact it was having, while others were “shamed” into abandoning these practices as a result of articles and radio programmes featuring their activities. Lastly, as a result of community debates, one community decided to launch 15 collective projects to address challenges affecting the community in a participatory manner.

### *Sustainability issues*

The skills imparted to the journalists in the course of the training, and the spirit of “citizen journalism” continues amongst the journalists in engaged in this project. Furthermore, Pax Press continues to incorporate the “debate” approach into their work more broadly speaking, and as a result of the funding received by the Government; and, local populations engaged in the project continue to call national radio programmes to express their views, for example. However, much remains to be done. The organisation only engaged in 20 of 416 sectors across the country; consequently, while the above is true, it is true largely only of those 20 sectors that benefitted from the engagement by journalists in their communities. Furthermore, it should be noted that Pax Press had most impact in those sectors that it visited at least twice as this allowed for learning and change to be fostered over time, and for journalists to follow up on the impact of the debates. Pax Press should, therefore, in future cover less sectors but in a more profound manner with at least two, if not three visits.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

The project appears to have revolutionised the journalist-community relationship, creating a fluid link, whereby community members feel free to call journalists to come and cover important issues. The project also re-injected “meaning” into debate: previously, authorities would hold meetings with communities, but this was an opportunity for a one-way communication: from the authority to communities. The debates fostered a culture of *dialogue*, whereby populations feel at greater ease of expressing their opinions and concerns about policies and activities that affect them – creating a two way form of communication.

Given the sensitive political context in which this project takes place it by far exceeded expectations: these engagements have indeed fostered a culture of democracy at the local level with impressive impacts on national-level policies; the impact is all the more impressive given that it lasted just one year. This evaluation unquestionably underscores that these debates should be held in all 416 sectors across the country in the context of a multi-year programme funded ideally by UNDEF but also other international, regional and local actors. The value, the methodology and the team implementing the project have been tried and tested, and has proven to be of value; care should be taken, however, not to incite

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<sup>2</sup>Anecdotal – these figures cannot be verified due to the lack of such data, but these figures were mentioned by three separate individuals.

political confrontation. This model should also be tailored and replicated through training and mentoring programmes to other media entities certainly across the African continent and possibly in other regions too.

The missed opportunity for this organisation to engage with UPHLS – as well as other UNDEF grantees in the country – cannot be overstated. The failure on the part of UNDEF to proactively connect these two organizations undermined the ability of both to better achieve their mandate. It would have been easy, for example, for Pax Press journalists to both ensure the topic of disability was covered in the context of village-level dialogues, but also to ensure that people with disabilities were encouraged to participate in them. Conversely, the extensive community-based and nation-wide activities of UPHLS would have benefited tremendously from being publicised through Pax Press’ extensive networks of TV, radio and press outlets. As one journalist from Pax Press stated: “journalists do not do advocacy, but they are the channel for ensuring it; they have both power and influence to effect meaningful change – even political change”. The project therefore underscored the central importance of media organisations for fostering democracy, as the work of other entities cannot be extensively known without them; UNDEF would therefore benefit from considering funding credible media entities more consistently in other countries where other democracy-related activities are underway.

### **3. Case Study Three: Increasing civic participation in Liberia (UDF-09-298-LIR)**

*Overview: Volunteers to Support International Efforts in Developing Africa (VOSIEDA)*

Volunteers to Support International Efforts in Developing Africa (VOSIEDA) is a Liberian, non-profit, non-governmental organization that promotes sustainable development through capacity-building, awareness and advocacy with a wide range of international, regional, national and local partners; VOSIEDA is based in Monrovia and has five (5) sub-regional offices around Liberia. Founded in 2002, the organization works on multiple poverty ‘front-lines’ to promote change so that local communities in post-conflict and poor settings can live productive, healthy and independent lives; to this end, VOSIEDA works in the areas of: democracy and human rights; sustainable agriculture; natural resource management; public health; community development; and, policy research. The organization supports practical action that enable people to improve their lives and shape their futures in Liberia and the countries of Mano River Union (Liberia, Guinea, Serra Leone and Ivory Coast) of West Africa region.

VOSIEDA was awarded \$180,000 by UNDEF in 2009 for a two-year project entitled, ‘Increasing civic participation of marginalized groups in Liberia’. The project was designed to promote civic awareness in post-war Liberia with a view to create broader and more meaningful participation in the October 2011 national elections. The project was motivated by a study conducted by VOSIEDA that found that over 65% of Liberians have previously voted out of fear, apathy and lack of knowledge – and often according to tribal affiliations - due in part to high levels of illiteracy, poverty and inadequate access to civic education and empowerment. Rural women and youth in particular have frequently been victims of manipulation by warlords and corrupt officials, who have used bribes, propaganda, threats and intimidation to secure votes. VOSIEDA proposed to address this problem through a series of ambitious activities, including: the development of 50 democratic and human rights networks of grassroots civil society organizations in rural Liberia to implement 100 civic and voters education programmes; training and deployment of 300 non-partisan grassroots

election monitors to observe the 2011 electoral processes and handle complaints; capacity-building for aspiring rural women and youth to stand for local and national elections; and, the creation of a sustainable national alliance to promote capacity in organizational management, fundraising, leadership and other issues.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with VOSIEDA*

VOSIEDA noted that the process for developing the project document alongside UNDEF was rigorous but highly informative. They felt that it was a tough learning process, but one through which they learnt that UNDEF “was significantly more flexible than other donors – it was a free-flowing conversation and collaboration” with a view to jointly developing a more robust project document. VOSIEDA was pleased to see that their work was also highlighted on the UNDEF webpage, but questioned why UNDEF did not put them in touch with other UNDEF grantees in-country with a view to facilitating collaboration. While there can be a high level of competition in-country between CSOs due to the shortage of funds, UNDEF is in a unique position – VOSIEDA believes – to foster greater collaboration between Monrovia-based CSOs, but also with weaker entities scattered throughout Liberia who often have significantly less capacity than those in the capital.

Prior to receiving the grant and engaging in the election process with UNDEF support and alongside other UN actors such as UNDP and UNMIL – who provided some technical support – VOSIEDA was not well-recognised either at the national or sub-national levels. However, as a result of the project VOSIEDA was able to develop a large group of election monitors and to create a formal relationship with the National Electoral Commission. Their work also increased their credibility and strengthened relationships with other CSOs spread throughout Liberia, since UNDEF support was seen as a “stamp of approval” for both the organisation and its mandate. However, UNDEF support also raised expectations; it gave many CSOs the impression that “VOSIEDA must be a rich organisation” and that UN support would last much longer than the two years initially envisioned. Fortunately, thanks to UNDEF support, which enabled VOSIEDA to build up an extensive network of capacitated CSOs and monitors, the organisation subsequently secured a grant with the European Union and Oxfam GB to continue supporting the extensive network that has been established.

Since the organisation was a first-time applicant to UNDEF, they were concerned that if they requested a large grant the application risked a greater chance of being rejected. This led them to ask for significantly less funds than the project required - with important impacts on VOSIEDA personnel and the CSO networks that engaged in this project. Rather than be paid for their work, many of those engaged for the purposes of this project did so on a voluntary basis and often without the required logistical support. For example, many of the CSOs who were trained in civic education and advocacy were tasked with engaging rural communities, often in distant locations. Given that no vehicles could be provided, this often meant walking for up to five hours in order to engage with communities, and many volunteers would end up sleeping outside in the bush in order to be able to continue their work the following day. This was an important learning experience for the organisation as it underscored the need to be realistic in their budgeting; it also highlights some of the budgetary constraints imposed by the UNDEF process, and the inability to apply for additional funds if the process ends up requiring it. This was especially true of the referendum that was held before the election, and which also required monitors to attend, but which had not been envisioned in the project document.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

What is most striking about this project is the fact that, even though it was closed in 2011, all those engaged were still able to articulate clear opinions about the impact the engagement had on them, their communities and their country; this is one of the many testimonies to the extensive and meaningful work carried out by this organisation. At the local level, CSOs and election monitors took part in intensive training programmes: the former on civic education and empowerment, and the latter on the principles and regulations of election monitoring. VOSIEDA was commended on many occasions for its inclusiveness: “everyone was involved, everyone knows who VOSIEDA is now - no matter what the mandate of the CSO everyone participated in civic awareness”. Indeed, VOSEIDA engaged with 50 CSOs, who in turn engaged with around 200 grassroots associations each, through a trainer of trainer model designed to capacitate rural communities. The CSOs were trained to pay particular attention to the most marginalised and disenfranchised populations including youth, women and people with disabilities.

The training entailed educating people about their rights, and about the importance of voting; people were encouraged not to think of the benefits for themselves of voting, but of their country as a whole, and for their children’s future. CSO representatives were instructed to underscore their own neutrality, and the importance of secrecy in voting to foster the notion that it was each person’s right and responsibility to vote for the person they felt would best represent them. Members of the CSOs and related associations then engaged in an extensive awareness campaign, often in some of the most remote areas of Liberia where few CSOs have engaged at all. They were trained to spend time with communities, gaining their trust and living their way of life as a means to facilitate communication and build greater trust; with this trust, they were able to convince many youth, women and people with disabilities – many of whom may otherwise not only have failed to vote but who may have actually sold their vote to criminals and warlords – to head to the polling stations. They also “recruited” many other women and youth in this way to join their cause and to assist with engaging with others. In addition, they were on hand to assist older people and people with disabilities, often literally “carrying” them to the polling station due to the absence of vehicles and the fact that many PWDs do not have wheelchairs or crutches to assist them.

The engagement had a profound effect on women in particular. Women in Liberian culture have traditionally taken a “back-seat role”, internalising the belief that their views do not matter, and that political business should be left to men; consequently, the awareness-raising engagement was particularly meaningful for them. “We felt inferior: we felt that only the men should speak and vote, but since the training, our eyes have been opened”, said a member of one women’s group; “we didn’t know that women had rights, but now we are demanding them” and “our goal is to compete with the men for political positions, for jobs, for education as we can do what they can do”, said another. This massive engagement paid off: in the region of Gbargna, where a focus group for this project was held, four women ran for office at the local level and three won. Consequently, for the first time in the history of Liberia, there are now women serving as local leaders, commissioners and chiefs – thereby also raising the visibility of issues affecting women and girls. Furthermore, the region now has four youth representatives below the age of 30 – another first for Liberia. As one women’s group underscored: “When you train women, you train a whole nation”. These important changes in the local political landscape can be largely attributed to the work of VOSIEDA and partner CSOs; UNMIL, UNDP, etc. it could also be argued that these

engagements strongly contributed to the election of Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, the first female to ever be elected head of state in Africa.

The promise made by CSOs engaging in civic education across the country that the vote would lead to changes across the country came true; all those engaged for the purposes of this evaluation underscored the fact that they believed positive changes *had* occurred as a result of those they elected into power. There are noticeably more hospitals, even if the quality is not always what should be expected; there are increased numbers of government-run schools, even if there are insufficient places to cater for all those wishing to have a place; and, a major road now runs from Monrovia to Nimba, allowing farmers to more easily access Monrovia where many sell their produce – even if the majority of the country remains unconnected by paved roads, even in and around the capital of Monrovia. It can be argued, therefore, that civic education on the part of VOSIEDA led the population at large to select a candidate that worked in their interests. Without question, the elections had a higher voter turn-out, with the highest number of women presenting themselves for election ever recorded in Liberia. The total turnout of registrar voted were 1,288,716 (71.6%) on October 11, 2011. And the elections passed without any significant incidence of violence. The organisations and individuals engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation attribute these outcomes to the work of VOSIEDA.

### *Sustainability issues*

The sustainability aspects of this project were stronger than in most other projects analysed as part of this evaluation. This is due to three key factors. First, the training provided foundational skills that went well beyond the project itself; civic education, after all, is not only about peaceful and transparent elections, but more broadly about “how to be a good citizen”, as one youth member underscored; furthermore, youth and women were empowered and encouraged to serve as “citizenship ambassadors” during and after the project. Consequently, the training focused broadly on the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship, which many of the youth and women internalised and went onto teach to others. Second, VOSIEDA integrated sustainability into the design of the project; from the beginning a coalition of CSOs was registered as its own entity – which includes CSOs from across the country – and supported by VOSIEDA at key moments and when requested. Thirdly, VOSIEDA had the foresight and the technical capacity to apply for funding in the second year of the grant to continue supporting the networks that had been developed as a result of the UNDEF project. In the second round of funding, provided by the European Union and Oxfam, VOSIEDA provided capacity-building on a wide range of technical and non-technical skills, including governance structures, financial management, human resource management, internal policies such as those on environment, gender equity, codes of conduct, HIV, accountability, etc. This second round of funding certainly ensured that the groups and networks created and supported in the context of the UNDEF project would live beyond the initial two-years of UNDEF funding.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

Liberia is now heading towards another round of elections in the second half of 2017 and this time without the support of UNMIL. The Peacekeeping Operation officially “drewdown” in July 2016 – just as this evaluation was underway in Liberia – leaving the Government in charge of its own security and electoral process. All those engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation were concerned: the country continues to exhibit high levels

of criminality; the majority of youth are unemployed and drug-addiction is an increasing problem amongst young men in particular; sexual violence, rape and child prostitution are common in rural areas and towns alike, and the majority of these crimes go unpunished. The tensions caused by these dynamics are likely to be exacerbated when campaigning begins in a few months' time and many are concerned by re-appearance of individuals affiliated with warlordism on the national political stage. There are also concerns about freedom of speech in the run up to the election: just two days after UNMIL formally withdrew from Liberia, one prominent national radio station – which is particularly critical of the current government – was shut down under the guise of illegal irregularities.

Such steps do not bode well for the forthcoming election and underscore the importance of projects such as those designed and implemented by VOSIEDA. The organization has demonstrated its extensive capacity to train, mobilise, empower and, it should be noted, *inspire* youth and women to serve as citizen ambassadors. Whether through UNDEF or through another partner, this project should be re-launched as soon as possible to prepare Liberians for the 2017 elections at an extremely fragile time in Liberia's post-conflict trajectory. It would make sense to place greater emphasis on preventing electoral violence and putting in place an early-warning and response mechanism in case such incidents occur. Furthermore, the organization would do well to focus greater levels of attention on state entities. While the previous project engaged with the National Electoral Commission and local government officials, this engagement should be expanded. The national-level executive, legislature, judiciary and local level representatives would also benefit from a greater understanding of civic education, and their vital role in fostering it amongst the population in order to avoid election-related violence. Moreover, with a referendum looming on constitutional reform – with vital implications for women and youth alike – there is a desperate need to educate the population on the significance of the referendum and the impact it could have on their lives.

Lastly, the experience of this organization underscored the importance for UNDEF to engage in meaningful ways with grantees regarding their budgets. At the moment it would appear that engagement focuses on ensuring salaries are proportionate, and material expenses – such as vehicles, computers etc. – either not included or minimal. As an organization promoting democracy, however, UNDEF has an important role to play in ensuring that its grantees are able to pay a 'living wage' in the country in question to all those engaged in the project. Volunteerism has its place, especially in a project regarding civic education, but there is a fine line between volunteerism and exploitation, especially in countries where poverty levels are so high and employment opportunities so rare; keen youth and women can easily be convinced into working for 'next to nothing', when 'nothing' is the alternative, but the right to decent work and decent pay is a vital element of any burgeoning democracy.

#### **4. Case Study Four: Fostering women Inclusion, Gender Equity and Political Participation Through Media (UDF-12-491-LIR)**

*Overview: Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC)*

The Liberia Women Media Action Committee (LIWOMAC) is a media development organization established in response to the violence and abuse suffered by women during the 2003 insurgency in Liberia. LIWOMAC promotes women's empowerment and rights, and seeks to raise the profile – and therefore *voice* – of women in media, with a view to increasing awareness and understanding of the issues that affect women's lives, and how to

better protect them. LIWOMAC established Liberia's first ever women-owned and run radio station (LWDR FM 91.1) – also with funding from UNDEF, which it uses to promote women journalists and coverage of women's issues; through the radio and as a result of community forums organised by LIWOMAC, the organization provides a platform for rural women to voice their opinions and hold the government accountable.<sup>3</sup> The organization also carries out research and advocacy campaigns on specific issues such as sexual violence, teenage pregnancies, female-genital mutilation and other related issues.

LIWOMAC was awarded its second grant of \$230,000 in 2013 for a project entitled 'Fostering Women Inclusion, Gender Equity and Political Participation Through Media', the implementation of which began in 2014. This two-year project was designed to provide predominantly rural women with greater access to information through the radio – and through the use of mobile technology specifically - and to increase the capacity of media organisations to report on gender-related issues. The project was conceptualised on the basis of analysis that demonstrated that only 5% of leadership positions in media are occupied by women, and that rural women's voices especially are absent from the news, and issues that affect their lives tend to be ignored by mainstream media. The project was therefore premised on the notion that with greater access to information women are able to make better decisions and contribute more meaningfully to dialogue processes, hold leaders accountable and influence policy decision making processes.

The project was therefore designed to give a greater number of women access to the radio through Information Communication Technologies (ICT), while simultaneously stimulating the interest of women to listen to the radio and call into talk programmes with their concerns. These engagements were complemented by thematic and specialist trainings for men and women on women's rights and how to effectively cover stories related to women in the media on the one hand, and for CSOs on how to undertake analytical research projects on the other; the project also included various surveys to better understand how women use media and information. The project was designed and the grant awarded prior to the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic; consequently, some aspects of the project were reoriented to ensure effective coverage of the crisis. It should be noted that despite having been awarded two grants, this is the first evaluation of LIWOMAC's work by UNDEF, although a prior evaluation of the first UNDEF-awarded project was conducted under the supervision of UNIFEM.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with LIWOMAC*

LIWOMAC found the process of engaging with UNDEF rigorous; consequently, the organization decided to work with an external consultant, especially since a degree of technical knowledge was required when elaborating the project document. The use of the consultant, combined with the fact that the organization has already worked with several donors undoubtedly reduced the impact of the project document preparation process on the organization. LIWOMAC would like to receive more training on monitoring and evaluation, so it may well have benefitted from engaging more concertedly in this process rather than outsourcing large parts of it to an external consultant. However, UNDEF's impact on the organization as a whole has been profound: **it is** thanks to UNDEF that the organization was able to launch the radio station, and through the radio station LIWOMAC is able to sell airtime which makes it more sustainable, creating opportunities to set up a new office –

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gnwp.org/incident-report/liberia-women-media-action-committee-liwomac>

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partially funded by a donor, and, therefore, to continue activities in between grants from donors.

Furthermore, some of the trainings held in the context of this project also assisted the grantee itself. The project included a training on undertaking analytical research, for example, which will enable LIWOMAC to grow since research should form the basis of all their proposals and, indeed, their journalistic work. Additionally, members of the organization participated in a training programme on gender-sensitivity, which will continue to inform their work at the radio station and more broadly in the context of LIWOMAC's work. LIWOMAC notes, however, that support from the UN generally sends a message to partners and beneficiaries especially, that the organization has achieved a certain level of competence and formality which can have negative consequences: it gives the impression that they must have "endless streams of funding", making it more difficult to manage the expectations of beneficiaries. It is unquestionable, however, that four years of support from UNDEF has made the organization more sustainable and enabled it to access funds from other donors.

Despite UNDEF support, the organization has faced some other significant challenges. For example, while the UN is seen as being neutral and impartial, this did not help overcome perceptions amongst some that – since Liberia has a female President – the radio must be somehow linked to the Government and propagating pro-government views (which is not always the case); LIWOMAC insists that – in line with journalistic ethics – the station strives to be balanced and objective when covering all its stories, regardless of the sources/personalities or institutions involved. Furthermore, since LIWOMAC has now taken on a relatively prominent role on the national stage, many are looking to the organization to help promote and move forward on the recently-agreed upon SDGs, an area where the LIWOMAC feels it would benefit from additional capacity- and knowledge-building. Lastly, like many journalists, due to limited funds LIWOMAC is not often able to follow up on stories in the way they would like to in order to ensure continuity in reporting.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

Before speaking about impact, it is important to note that the most impressive achievement of this organization was the creation of a mobile radio platform. LIWOMAC partnered with a Liberian phone company to create a platform that essentially turns almost any mobile phone (not necessarily a smart phone) into a radio station. By dialling a number (5999) and clicking on a link sent via SMS, recipients are able to listen to the radio through their own mobile phones. This is especially important in rural areas where many may have access to a phone, but extremely few are likely to have the purchasing power to acquire a radio. Combined with awareness raising about the service, therefore, LIWOMAC is now able to give women in remote areas access to the radio as long as they have a mobile phone and a mobile phone network. The fact that this service is provided to beneficiaries free of charge is also a significant advantage of the project. Given the prevalent use of mobile phones now across Africa, it is certain that the mobile platform could be of interest to other CSOs seeking to raise awareness and provide access to information in other countries.

The impact of the project on beneficiaries, however, has been mixed and some concerns have been raised. On the positive side, through engagements with women in the context of 'Listening Clubs' established by LIWOMAC, women's access to information has increased, which was particularly important during the Ebola crisis and may well have saved many lives. Aside from the Ebola crisis, it appears that, as a result of women being encouraged to voice their concerns through the radio station (by calling into talk show

programmes, for example) the Government has, in many instances, been pressured to respond; for example, in Kamara Town – visited in the context of this evaluation – women attribute improvements made to the local school, the provision of a water pump and a public latrine to their engagement on the radio station, which in turn prompted the government to respond. The women also claim that as a result of speaking out on the radio they feel more empowered in their homes to confront violent husbands; more broadly speaking, they have therefore come to have a better understanding of their rights.

Similarly, the young journalists who took part in the training on gender-sensitivity and women's rights have gained invaluable skills in reporting issues relevant to the lives of women, and more broadly in how to undertake balanced investigative reports. CSOs that were trained on how to undertake analytical, data-driven research claim it was “one of the most of the most useful trainings they have ever engaged in”, and several of the participants have since used these skills in the context of other projects. Lastly, the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) - which stated that the station's rise to the national stage was “impressive” - attributes the increase in the coverage of women's issues, and the increasing awareness about women's rights more broadly, to the work of LIWOMAC. This assertion is underscored by the fact that one of LIWOMAC's employees won a national award for her work on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). It was also evident from interviews undertaken in the context of this evaluation that the radio station is well-appreciated by Government representatives.

There are some areas where the Organization could have strengthened its approach, thereby increasing its impact on marginalised women. Women's empowerment is a sensitive topic in conflict or post-conflict contexts, and especially when it relates to issues of domestic violence or sexual violence. Sensitivities around the approach used were brought to the attention of the evaluator in Kamara Town (it is unclear whether the approach has been used in other places, too) where women have been encouraged to speak out about issues affecting their lives including criminal gangs. The ‘Listening Club’ in Kamara – established by LIWOMAC - was extremely worried that the presence of the evaluator would bring undue attention to their group; upon further ‘probing’ it emerged that the leader of the group has received death threats and had serious concerns about her safety and that of her family. One member of the women's group also claimed that she had been raped. While criminal gangs and sexual violence are prevalent in Liberia, there is a possibility that the women's role in the group, and their outspoken behaviour on the radio may have made them particular targets in their communities.

This raises questions around what kind of protection the women are given when speaking out about criminal dynamics in their communities, and whether and how to provide anonymity for women calling into radio stations. Ironically, the increase in threats against the women can be viewed in part as a “success” of the project, since radio coverage of these issues poses a threat to criminal gangs, and they react as a means to protect their own interests. LIWOMAC believes that issues related to gangs and rape preceded the intervention by the station, and that the radio and the women's group gave the women a reference point in times of need. The pre-existence of criminal dynamics, however, underscores the importance of a more proactive and sensitive engagement, including connecting the Group with organizations in Monrovia that assist women victims of sexual violence for free, for example. Given the difficult nature of criminal dynamics and gang violence, it may have also been helpful if LIWOMAC had brought these issues to the attention of the national authorities and the UN as soon as they became apparent and through

more direct means that the radio. The risks posed to women may have been lessened by a more robust risk mitigation strategy on the part of LIWOMAC.

The project appears to have initiated some process of change, and has been instrumental at key moments such as during the Ebola crisis. There are, however, key areas where the organizations may benefit from thinking through some of the below recommendations:

- First, in order to get a better sense of who is using the mobile service and when, it could have been useful for LIWOMAC **to elaborate an agreement with the mobile company concerning “clicks” on the link sent to mobile phones**. Currently, the only figures available are the ones expressed in the project document, which states that the new mobile platform will help reach 75,000 women, and the actual capacity of the platform, which only supports 5000 users; it should be noted that actual usage may be above 5000 users since new users can connect when others have disconnected; again, more information on the actual number of users would be helpful.
- Second, **literacy training could serve as an immensely helpful component of LIWOMAC’s women’s empowerment approach**. In addition to SMS about the radio programmes, LIWOMAC also set up a text message system, whereby women can send in comments and receive a response via text; however, due to high rates of literacy in Liberia – especially amongst women – it is unclear whether the most marginalised would really be able to benefit from this innovative system.
- Third, **female journalists will benefit from technical trainings in journalism, but may also benefit from much broader ‘empowerment’ training themselves**. The female journalists engaged with for this project appear to have improved their skills, but they lacked confidence; they consistently deferred to the one man in the room and were reluctant to give responses to questions. Understanding that their views matter, and how to articulate them, would be of tremendous benefit to such young journalists.
- Fourth, LIWOMAC may like to consider elaborating its own comprehensive **journalistic code of ethics, or a list of principles by which the organization abides by**. Several of the journalists stated that they must “often given money in exchange for information, or buy things from people’s shops in order to encourage them to participate in interviews”. This poses serious challenges to the process of undertaking unbiased, ethical investigative reporting. The code of ethics may also like to consider the use of privacy and data protection, since the phone numbers and names of women who have received text message have been received (and shared with the evaluator); while there are no data protection laws in Liberia, it will be important for LIWOMAC journalists to convey how the women’s information will be used.
- Fifth, the organization would have benefited from **communicating more consistently with UNDEF** about the challenges they faced. Issues not linked to Ebola, included: the failure to find a project officer (and a lack of clarity of how such funds were used); the diaspora website does not appear to have been created; the M&E position was terminated for “administrative reasons”; media monitoring does not appear to have been consistently undertaken; and, LIWOMAC undertook a massive relocation of the office/radio station in the middle of the UNDEF project, thereby taking the radio and mobile platform effectively “off air” for six months during project implementation (LIWOMAC notes that while the radio was off-air due to relocation,

it did remain engaged with local community radio stations across the project countries, which continued to host talk shows, cover news stories, and air radio messages.); the fact remains that these issues were not communicated to UNDEF. Consequently, by the time the mid-term report was completed, the majority of activities had not been completed. These are certainly issues that a donor should be informed of, and many are areas where UNDEF may have been able to assist, or at least advise.

- Sixth, the organisation may wish to **revise its approach to animating discussions in villages in order to foster deeper and more interactive discussions**. In the debate witnessed by the evaluator, the meeting took the tone of a classroom setting i.e. an interaction between a professor and students, rather than between CSO and community members. Furthermore, the conversation concerning the age of consent was steered towards encouraging community members to state whether they were in favour of the age being 16 or 18 in black and white terms, with less effort being made to offer clarity on the what the “age of consent” means, and what implications this would have if the law is passed, and what the decisions means for community members and their children. The debate also only lasted one hour, which is not nearly enough time to discuss such culturally-complex and -loaded topics. It seems the debate time is being limited to, perhaps, suit an available radio slot time, rather than to meet the needs of community members. LIWOMAC could explore editing longer discussions, for example, to be suitable for radio airing.
- Seventh, **LIWOMAC would benefit CSOs in its network by taking a broader approach to training**. The training on research methodologies is a key part of programme design and one which LIWOMAC wished to develop skills in. Its network of CSOs, however, would have benefited from a more comprehensive training programme, as many were not able to put the training in context, nor into action. Since research design is only one component of a solid project document, for example, LIWOMAC may wish to help CSOs gain skills in other areas, such as logical framework, theory of change and M&E.
- Lastly, it is **questionable whether enough effort has been made to engage men in the context of this project**; undoubtedly, the fact that it is a ‘women’s democracy radio’ rather than a ‘democracy radio’ more broadly speaking limits somewhat the impact such a radio station can have on men, even if many programs are broadcast on other radio stations. The organization’s mandate would benefit from a “re-think” on how it can more proactively engage men in its trainings, awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives, in order to underscore the fact that women’s empowerment is of benefit to the men *and* women, rather than potentially positing them on different sides of a ‘divide’. It is, lastly, well-understood that if men are part of the ‘problem’ in terms of the suppression and/or violation of women’s rights, they must certainly be part of the solution.

### *Sustainability issues*

There are concerns over whether or not the mobile radio platform initiative will be sustainable, and whether it will be possible to expand it to more users given the costs associated with the service; concerns are all the more prevalent since the sustainability of this platform does not appear to have been taken into serious consideration during the elaboration of the project – a key issue that UNDEF could have looked at during the project document

elaboration process; this may create concerns for women who increasingly turn to the station this for information. As the Liberian mobile company also appears to have engaged in the initiative on a profit-basis imitative rather than from a ‘corporate responsibility angle’, arguments for such an approach should be made to the company representatives and a strategy should be designed to positively engage with the company concerning sustainability issues. LIWOMAC informed the evaluator that it has arranged with Cellcomto to maintain the platform for an additional ten months.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

The concerns for the safety of the women in Kamara Town prompted the evaluator to raise the issue with UNDEF, who subsequently raised the issue with UNMIL. Requests were also made to both LIWOMAC and the other grantee in Liberia, VOSEIDA, to follow up on this issue in a sensitive manner in order to better understand the threats against these women and how best to protect them. Both organizations took a highly proactive, stance, engaging in an analysis exercise with the women concerned and other members of the community. As a result of the concerted efforts of UNDEF and the CSOs on the ground, UNMIL held a mass community meeting in Kamara Town concerning how to address the issue; the Liberia Government also decided to open a sub-police depot in the area – demonstrating clearly what can be achieved when UNDEF is conveying information to the rest of the UN System. Armed robbers attacked the community the night before the meeting was due to take place, looting a school, radio station and a business women in the area, underscoring the need for greater attention in the town. UNPOL is exploring how the National Police can be supported to run the depot.

This incidence underscores the risks associated with engaging in post-conflict and fragile contexts, and the need to engage in a rights-based, conflict-sensitive manner. Even where organizations may not have the specific skills required to assist in particular situations, by putting the rights and protection of vulnerable groups first they can serve as a vital link by putting vulnerable communities in touch with other groups, locally, nationally and internationally that can assist. After all, no organization can be expected to all have the right capabilities and knowledge to assist in every single situation, but they should have the knowledge and the will to ensure necessary connections are made to assist in the right way, at the right time.

This project also highlights the dangers of following project documents ‘to the letter’, a model which is at least in part fostered by UNDEF due to the lack of flexibility in the budget; many organizations, such as the EU for example, offer a 25% leeway on the budget if the context dictates. Such a leeway may have enabled LIWOMAC to focus more on the needs vulnerable groups and to extend engagements where required, including literacy training for illiterate groups – since this appears to be a basic building block of any empowerment initiative for women. By sticking to the letter of the project in this instance, the organization veers dangerously close to creating a perception that the women serve the radio station – by providing content and calling in – but that the radio station, supported by a CSO whose mandate is to protect women – is not adequately serving the groups of women it is designed to serve. More flexibility is required, and programmes based on needs, not on mandates.

Moving forward, for the grantee but also for UNDEF, the project confirms the belief of the evaluator that that access to information is a necessary but insufficient precondition for the empowerment of women. If vulnerable women are provided with information but not

provided with support in order to transform that information into action information becomes simply ‘background noise’; women need to be supported to translate such information into action, through advocacy campaigns and knowledge about how to protect themselves through the resources available to them. The project similarly confirms the need for local and national government representatives to be engaged in all stages of a project cycle; it is not enough to rely on government representatives *possibly* listening to radio programmes; their views must be sought on issues affecting women, not only to ensure a response but also to ensure that women are made aware of the confines in which they “calls for help” take place. There are limits to what the government can do and when, and these limits need to be explained clearly to women so that they do not expect that every call made through a radio should be answered by a government response: the intricacies of policy-making are unfortunately not that simple. UNDEF has a significant role to play in this regard by proactively engaging with grantees *both* in the project design phase but also during implementation, as and when such instances arise, to ensure the best result and the protection of human rights. UNDEF’s role in the substantive parts of this project has been minimal – to the detriment of results on the ground.

A few additional, smaller points of relevance to UNDEF are raised by this case study. First, if an evaluation is to be a learning opportunity for the CSO it should not be conducted at the end of the process, when the project is already complete and when room for manoeuvre is already lost; the evaluation is not meant to be a test and CSOs are not expected to be perfect. Second, no grantee should be awarded a second grant without an UNDEF-led evaluation, in the same way that no grantee should be refused a grant without an evaluation; the evaluation has the potential to perform a mid-way ‘check-point’ in a two-phase project, undertaken to ascertain whether the CSO has the capacity to undertake the second phase, and what changes are required to ensure maximum, positive impact. Third, grantees should be discouraged from engaging with consultants to help them with the elaboration of project documents; this undermines UNDEF’s comparative advantage with regards to the “guidance process” i.e. its capacity to transfer knowledge about project design and M&E from the UN to the grantee, a process most grantees have found to be invaluable. Fourth, given some of the questions raised by this project around media ethics, it may be advisable to communicate internationally recognised standards on media ethics to grantees, in order to assist them with becoming better and more professional media organisations. Lastly, women’s empowerment projects which do not equally and proactively include men are likely to raise tensions among genders and doomed to fail, and should be avoided by UNDEF as much as possible; when designing such projects, UNDEF grantees should be asking, “What will happen if the projects reaches its goals?” – and seeking to maximise the positive and minimise the negative responses to this question.

## **II. Middle East**

### **Case Study Five: Democratic and Empowerment Process for youth in Lebanon (UDF-11-438-LEB)**

*Overview: The Permanent Peace Movement*

The Permanent Peace Movement (PPM) is a Beirut-based organization founded in 1986 during the height of the Lebanese civil war by a group of university students. Unified by their aversion to violence, and their common vision of a brighter, more peaceful future, they lay the foundations for what has become an experienced and highly professionalised non-governmental organization promoting peace through the MENA region. PPM works on a

wide range of peace-related issues, including religious tolerance, arms trade negotiations, preventing the use of child soldiers, peace education, non-violence, and historical memory and reconciliation. PPM works in cooperation with local communities across Lebanon, and forms part of multiple regional and international networks, including the Middle East and North Africa Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (MENAPPAC), and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), amongst many others.

PPM was awarded its first grant from UNDEF of \$225,000 for a project entitled, ‘Democratic and Empowerment Processes for youth’ to be implemented in partnership with International Development and Empowerment Association (IDEA) NGO.<sup>4</sup> This two-year project was designed by IDEA President to promote and enable youth to realise their rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives and society at large, through a wide range of empowerment and conflict resolution activities; the activities were designed to help overcome the rigid sectarian and highly polarised cultural and political environment in Lebanon, and to enable youth to cooperate across these entrenched divides. The project was developed on the basis of an analysis which demonstrated that the voices of young people are consistently overlooked, that NGOs working with youth often lack the capacity to effectively promote their rights, and that awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Lebanon is extremely low; these dynamics are exacerbated by the fact that youth are often inculcated with the ideas passed to them by their parents who survived the war, and who lived through periods of extreme violence and the disintegration of social cohesion.

The project was designed, therefore, to promote youth participation in public life through social empowerment of youth and a capacitated civil society through a wide range of complementary activities including: a TOT for NGOs on working with youth; awareness-raising and training for parents on the rights of youth and how to more effectively communicate with adolescents; youth empowerment workshops across all six governorates, covering topics including the convention on the rights of the child, youth participation, democratic processes, advocacy, gender, leadership and conflict resolution; cross-sectarian group visits to historical sites across Lebanon; engaging in the procedures for electing a National Youth Council; advocacy campaigning, and diverse communication and outreach-related activities. It is important to note that the project was designed and submitted to UNDEF prior to the outbreak of conflict and violence in Syria, which had profound implications for the phases of implementation, necessitating two no-cost extensions and diverse adaptations.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with PPM*

PPM found the process of engaging with UNDEF extremely rigorous and time-intensive: it took almost one year for them to negotiate and refine the project according to UNDEF’s criteria. While the process was demanding, they appreciated the dedication of staff members who were interested in every aspect of the project, and eager to find ways to assist PPM to improve it. They found that UNDEF was extremely engaged in the process, and available whenever required; PPM was also pleased to receive two staff from UNDEF who came to discuss the project and assist with challenges where necessary. In light of the fundamental challenges presented by the outbreak of the war in Syria, the ramifications this had on the socio-political context in Lebanon – particularly in and around the Bekaa region and in the South – PPM also found that UNDEF was extremely receptive to accepting changes to the

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<sup>4</sup> IDEA was not interviewed in the context of this evaluation given that the focus was on the direct grantee.

project, and to granting extensions to give the organisation more time to implement the project.

Given PPM's and IDEA's extensive experience with international donors, the process of elaborating a logframe with indicators and targets, etc. was not particularly novel, nor did it therefore necessarily enable the organization to learn new skills concerning project design and management. However, UN support in the Lebanon context specifically, and in the Middle Eastern region more broadly is particularly instrumental. Many staff at PPM and beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation underscored the importance of UN funding specifically for the success of this project. Suspicion of the involvement of international actors in the Middle Eastern context is high, and questions often arise concerning who is providing the funding, their intentions and motivations. Support from other actors, such as the US, Iran or Saudi Arabia, for example, can raise suspicions that there are religious or political motivations behind the engagement, risking low participation or rejection of the initiative altogether. Having UN support, however, is still largely perceived as being impartial – given the project a level of legitimacy it may otherwise have lacked.

In addition to legitimacy, having UN funding also sends a message that “the organisation is credible, able to manage funds and implement projects effectively – why else would the organisation be given funds from the UN?”, one PPM staff member asked. Since working with UNDEF, PPM has also been able to form relationships with the Arab League, and to work in a broader range of fields, including arms control for example. Consequently, UN support enabled the organisation to “go to the next level”, creating the conditions necessary for the entity to strengthen regional and national relationships alike.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The impact of this project on the youth that participated should not be underestimated. Bringing together youth from different sectarian groups, both young boys and girls, from across all six governorates is an impressive feat that is difficult to comprehend for those unfamiliar with the Lebanese context. It involved extensive trust-building endeavours with the parents of those youth involved – not least given the spiralling security context at the time - and a leap of faith for those organising and leading the implementation of the project that the youth would be able to overcome the prejudices instilled in them by their families, their communities and the media. For the majority of these youth, it was the very first time they had ever met and interacted with someone of a different faith, let alone become such close friends; for others, it was the first time they even had the opportunity to leave their community, so having the chance to visit parts of Lebanon they had only read or heard about on television or radio left a huge mark on them. Youth have gone on to develop meaningful friendships and to appreciate the fact that they now have friends from all parts of the country, and from all religious sects and also across Lebanese-Palestinian divides. As one member of the Youth Council underscored in one of the focus group sessions held for this evaluation:

*“I used to be shy; I couldn't speak in front of anyone. I only knew people from my region, and when meeting someone else I didn't know what I could and couldn't say. I didn't go to a very open minded school. I didn't know how to behave. I was someone who used to stay at the home always, but now I've met these great people, I try to understand and to appreciate them, and straight way they liked me. And it's very easy to understand other people and become friends...now I have friends and skype with people who live far away. We gained traits that don't just go away, things that will*

*stick for life. We didn't just learn and throw away into the sea. It will help us moving forward. "*

In addition to vital relationship-building across religious and political divides, the project also imparted knowledge and skills likely to stay with the youth long into adulthood and their professional lives. First, the training taught them how to evaluate problems, and develop solutions that tackle the root causes of the problems. Second, the youth were taught how to use social media, not only to stay in touch with one another, but also to create advocacy campaigns on social issues; many of the youth do not have easy access to phones or computers, so it was particularly novel for them to be given such skills. Third, in addition to building relationships amongst themselves, the youth were encouraged to serve as "ambassadors" for reconciliation, trustbuilding and engaging in 'civic life' amongst their families and communities; they went back to their communities with a desire to spread the notion that "democracy is about culture, about learning to respect all opinions and differences, while finding solutions that everyone can accept", one participant underscored. Fourth, they were able to experience first-hand what it means to participate in meaningful, democratic electoral processes, at a time when the Lebanese parliament had extended its own term, undermining the democratic process at the national level; they engaged in political campaigning and policy-making, and understood what it means to be elected, and to represent others in the context of the Youth Council. Given the political context in Lebanon, for many of the youth this was their first 'contact' with such a transparent and credible process.

Lastly, the youth were given first-hand experience of working on an advocacy campaign and of interacting directly with political figures. Once the Youth Council had been formed, the youth were encouraged to select an issue that was important to them and on which they wanted to develop an advocacy campaign. They decided to focus on the issue of child soldiers and the non-ratification by Lebanon of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of youth in armed conflict' - since Lebanon is one of only three Arab countries not to have ratified the convention. The experience for the youth was profound on several levels: first, they came to understand their own role in preventing recruitment of children into armed conflict, both by speaking about the issue in their own communities, but also as a result of understanding that many of the children choose to join because they feel marginalised by their peers; second, they gained confidence through the trainings and knowledge imparted to them, especially since they came to realise that they knew significantly more about the topic than many of the political figures they engaged with; lastly, they had a positive interaction with Lebanese Government officials who spent significant amounts of time listening to the presentations of the youth and hearing their concerns about child soldiers. This latter point is fundamental given the absence of trust between citizens and the state; the children, however, felt heard by the political figures and received promises that they would look into the issue and seek to influence changes as much as possible.

One of the project's many innovations was the direct engagement with the parents of youth. This had mixed results, however, due to the extent of the obstacles to be overcome and some aspects of the approach used by PPM and IDEA. The trainings and sensitization sessions by NGOs with the parents were designed to both raise awareness about the rights of children, and to increase the ability of parents to communicate with their children, and manage common challenges associated with adolescents. In general, such skills and knowledge was well-received: parents learnt how to accept and listen to youth and were supportive of the opportunities the project gave their children, opportunities which they never

had and which they could not offer their children (such as meeting children from other parts of the country, visiting historical sites, training in social media, etc.); one parent appreciated that the project gave his children an “objective-oriented social life”, which he felt gave more meaning to their social interactions. Some parents however were critical of the action, stating that they did not need the international community to come and tell them about the rights of youth and the value of engaging with their children, stating that such core UN values “were created by our own ancestors and are inherent to our Muslim faith”. Rather than presenting the project through the lens of the international “Rights of the Child”, therefore, PPM and IDEA may benefit from anchoring such initiatives in the religious and social faiths of the stakeholders involved. PPM and IDEA may be able to overcome the impression that the international and traditional are in opposition, but rather that such engagements are designed to help local communities revive and/or put into practice local traditions more effectively.

The project encountered other challenges. First and foremost were the contextual challenges associated with the changes in security context as a result of the war in Syria; this presented significant challenges for the movement of the youth across the country, and in terms of gathering in large groups. Largely speaking, these problems were successfully overcome thanks to the tenacity of PPM and IDEA staff. However, with more time, the changes in context may have led to more extensive changes to the project: while not possible under UNDEF rules, it might have been helpful to postpone the implementation by at least a year at the beginning of the project, given the extreme levels of uncertainty. This would have allowed for a re-design based on the new context, which would have also included therefore Syrian refugee youth – an addition which would have helped overcome a more recent schism in Lebanese society.

Moreover, the direct beneficiaries of the project were relatively small in number: while 130 youth (and some of their parents) were initially involved in the project, once formed the youth council involved only 30 members; a more practical alternative to reach more participants could have been achieved by forming “Local Youth Councils” to carry out projects at the village or district level, while interacting with the National-level Youth Council, for example. Regional Secretariats were formed, but these were less active and perhaps ‘subsidiary’ to, the Youth Council, rather than having their own active role to play. Furthermore, several youth complained that the meetings were too sporadic and too easily interrupted by exams and school holidays; this problem could have been overcome by making the selection process for participating in the project competitive and by asking youth to sign a letter of commitment at the beginning of the process; conversely, most of the youth were selected by CSOs or by the Social Development Councils (SDCs) (part of the Ministry of Social Affairs), creating some level of bias and potential perceptions of unfairness on the part of youth who are not already involved with CSOs or the SDCs; had other youth been aware of these opportunities, they may have been incentivised to join irrespective of prior relationships with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Lastly, the project would have been even more successful if small grants for the youth to implement civic-related projects – alongside CSOs – at the end of the project had been included in the initial UNDEF budget, as this would have helped to maintain the momentum of the project. The children were encouraged after all to identify problems in their own communities, and to design potential solutions to solve them; however, without funds to implement such solutions this was an educational, but somewhat abstract exercise, and a missed opportunity to transform skills into practice thereby closing the circle and learning a practical method to interact with reality. A similar project, implemented in Palestine (UDF-09-311-PAL) and already shared with PPM, could prove to be a good model to combine with the one already used by PPM and underscoring again the

extent to which CSOs could learn from one another if such a process was facilitated actively by UNDEF staff.

### *Sustainability issues*

It is unclear whether the Youth Council itself will be sustainable, since without financing and some level of support it is difficult for the youth to continue meeting consistently; it will be important to find ways to obtain financing or Government support that enables the project to continue, and for the National Youth Council to be involved in training and “passing on the baton” to other youth, helping to widen the impact of the project beyond those directly involved during the UNDEF phase of the project. This is one of the major weaknesses of the project, one highlighted by UNDEF during the project’s design phase, and by the TRANSTEC evaluators.

Despite these weaknesses, the project is sustainable and has ongoing impacts in a variety of other important ways. The youth involved in the project were extremely marked by it; they will go on to become active, professional members of society, to have their own families, etc.; almost all of those engaged with for the purposes of this evaluated underscored the fact that this project has inspired them to continue working to positively influence society in Lebanon. As one participant said: “I don’t want to get a job and watch the world collapse around me silently; I want to be engaged, through CSOs or through other means”. They are all “Ambassadors” for the values at the heart of the project and were passionate about continuing to push for the ratification of the Optional Protocol, for example, at the national level, and to continue speaking about the issue to prevent children joining armed (extremist) groups at the local level. Furthermore, almost all those youth that formed part of the National Youth Council have gone on to serve as volunteers in other capacities in their communities – either with the CSOs that helped train them, or with the SDCs at the local level; the concept of volunteerism was not well-understood amongst the youth before the PPM/IDEA project. Furthermore, many youth created clubs in their own schools to help share the knowledge they acquired with others. The HCC also reiterated several times that they will do their best to find a way to support the project, and to encourage the youth that participated to remain engaged in other work of this nature.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

Besides the recommendations already mentioned above, this evaluation highlighted the need for all grantees to be given the opportunity to reflect and provide inputs on evaluations before they are made public – as is customary amongst international and national actors alike. PPM/IDEA, however, were surprised to find that the TRANSTEC evaluation had been made public without their inputs, not least given the findings of the evaluation – which PPM/IDEA and the current evaluator feel failed to take the Lebanese context into consideration on the one hand, and made several unwarranted criticisms on the other. For example, the TRANSTEC evaluation claimed NGOs did not want to participate in the engagement, when in fact many were simply involved in the relief activities related to the Syrian refugee crisis; the TRANSTEC evaluator also criticised the lack of linkages between activities, whereas the trainings, visits and communication activities were all designed in support of the ultimate goal of capacitating and empowering youth.

The second major issue raised by this project is the time-lapse between the application submitted by the grantee and the beginning of the project, which in total can span a period of

18 months. In this instance, the context in Lebanon had changed so dramatically that project implementation become extremely problematic. Furthermore, had there been less time-lapse between the design and implementation, PPM/IDEA surely would have made more effort to include marginalised Syrian populations in the project, which would have been highly beneficial. It will be important for UNDEF to find ways to reduce the time required to both select the project and refine it in order to ensure the contextual analysis on which the project is built is still relevant. Alternatively, if this is not possible, UNDEF could at least take this time-lapse into account and allow for more flexibility when the project may start, and during its implementation. At the end of the project design phase, it could be useful to review the budget and the context so they can be updated according to the moment in which the project begins.

## **6. Case Study Six: Media and art as catalysts for free speech and access to information in Jordan (UDF-10-373-JOR)**

*Overview: The Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists*

The Center for Defending the Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) was established in 1998 as a CSO working to defend media freedom in Jordan. The Center was founded following several major setbacks to press freedom, beginning with the temporary press and publications law of 1997, which increased restrictions on the media and caused many newspapers to shut down. CDFJ works to protect freedom and democracy in Jordan and the Arab world, while promoting respect for human rights, justice, equality, development, non-violence and open dialogue; it maintains strict independence, and impartiality in the context of political processes but it stands against all policies and laws designed to restrict free and independent media. There are three key pillars to its work in Jordan, including: the protection of journalists through legal aid and protection; developing media professionalism, through training, support and dialogue; and, improving the media environment, through government lobbying and advocacy, improved state-society communications, and education. Through a variety of customized programs and training, CDFJ also promotes the skills and professionalization of journalists in all Arab countries.

The CDFJ was awarded \$200,000 in Round Five in 2010 for a project that ran from 2012 to 2014 entitled, 'Media and art as a catalyst for free speech and access to information (Freedom Messengers) in Jordan'. The project was designed to engage young, talented artists and to encourage them to use all forms of art in promoting change, advocating free speech, media freedom and human rights as cornerstones of democracy. Research undertaken by CDFJ indicated that youth in Jordan are not motivated to become part of the democratic process, and that new, innovative means were required to inspire and engage with youth. CDFJ believes that art, music, film and digital media are mediums through which youth – who represent 60-70% of the country's population - can be reached and inspired to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and their country. However, to date, such mediums have not been used to spread messages associated with human rights, reform and democracy, and Jordan more broadly lacks journalists specialised in these issues.

The project was designed therefore to, firstly, increase media coverage on human rights, media freedom, free speech and access to information by training young journalists to become knowledgeable and active in these areas. The second key objective was to engage youth in human rights, media freedom and access to information-related issues through artistic activities related to music, film, comedy, theatre and other mediums. As a result of

knowledgeable and skilled young journalists and young artists, CDFJ hoped to reach around 20,000 youth, thereby creating greater awareness of these key issues, and a more favourable climate for progress and advancement. The trainings were successfully completed, and the organisation printed and distributed 10 editions of a supplement called 'Baranda' detailing human rights and media-related issues; furthermore, 20 artists were trained and formed a group called the 'Freedom Messengers', who produced a variety of films, rap songs, art exhibitions and theatre plays infused with ideas and concepts explored during the training. The works were promoted through public events, a dedicated website and various social media campaigns on the theme of 'I have the right to know'.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with CDFJ*

CDFJ found the project document elaboration process exhaustive and intense; compared to other organisations with which they have worked, the process seemed extremely long and the proposal more complex than many others they have worked on. CDFJ has engaged with many other international actors, and – despite the challenges - feels they benefit from the process each time: "This time, we had to learn the UNDEF way of designing a project". Particularly beneficial for CDFJ was the logical framework, outcomes and indicators, as they have been paying increasing attention to learning MNE processes. Understanding the need for SMART indicators and targets has helped them focus their work and monitor their impact, whereas previously they had a tendency to use much broader outcomes. The process, therefore, made them more results-, rather than activity-, oriented: "we learnt to focus not on what we want to do but on what we want to achieve". The organization has since undertaken a USAID training on M&E, which has helped them to understand the extent to which their logical framework for UNDEF could have been strengthened in some areas; nonetheless, CDFJ believe that the guidance process provided by UNDEF certainly made project implementation easier, despite the weaknesses of the framework in some places.

The length of the application and guidance process created some difficulties for CDFJ, which is used to planning for projects that will take place in three to six months-time. With UNDEF, the time between application and implementation was one year and two months. This had significant implications for the project and the budget: during that period the so-called 'Arab Spring' broke out, which changed the priorities of many actors and donors alike; the context was simply extremely different by the time the funds had been released, and this may have had implications for the way the project had been designed had CDFJ been given the opportunity to design it to suit the implementation context. These events specifically, but the time delay more broadly, also created price fluctuations that could not be anticipated in the budget, with implications on how much they had to spend during project implementation. For CDFJ, these issues were exacerbated by the fact that it was not always clear to them when exactly the project would begin, making it difficult to plan for other activities.

However, the benefits of working with UNDEF largely outweighed these disadvantages. Working with UN bodies in Middle East is particularly beneficial since foreign funding can be a controversial issue and CSOs are sometimes accused of having a foreign or "hidden" agenda; furthermore, some foreign-funded government and politicians accuse CSOs of being spies - especially when funding comes from agencies affiliated to governments, such as USAID or EU, or other similar European agencies. The UN is being perceived as a more neutral body, since the UN is an intergovernmental organization, while some beneficiaries are not able to separate funding received from other countries from their

political positions. CDFJ felt that in addition to the vital ‘branding’ issues for the Middle East provided by UNDEF support, the principles and goals of UNDEF also fully aligned with theirs – especially “the need to work *with* the government in order to avoid having doors and windows closed on us”. Working with the UN, more broadly speaking, also gave the organisation ‘credit’ to work with other UN and international actors, since it sent the message that the organisation is credible, and has attained a certain level of institutional capacity. Regardless of these comparative advantages of UN funding, the artists involved in the project were suspicious to some extent about the “foreign funding” for the project and of the “hidden agenda” of the UN; however, when they saw that their own ideas were implemented without any changes or interference, their faith was restored; the young artists now have a better understanding of what it means to work with international donors.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The outputs of this project have been prolific, and results therefore diverse – results that are all the more impressive given the increasingly restrictive measures concerning freedom of expression and freedom of media put in place by the Government since 2012 onwards. The motivation and subsequent success of the “Freedom Messengers” is one of the most notable achievements: the twenty members of the group – artists with no previous background in human rights and activism - were engaged in a highly innovative, experiential training on human rights, conflict resolution, communication and advocacy. Following the training, artists who had “previously focused on love and life”, went onto produce ten short films on citizenship, the right to monitor government, issues related to ‘honour crimes’, and the rights of the child; two music albums on creating a culture of freedom and human rights; four songs on the ‘right to know’; and, a broad series of plays and sketches on related themes, including women empowerment – all of which were distributed widely.

What is notable about the Freedom Messengers is the dynamic interaction between the project and their own popularity, and, therefore, their own ability to reach a diverse and broad audience. By embracing social and political issues, many of these artists have gone onto achieve greater fame, underscoring thirst amongst the youth for public figures they can identify with who are able to address such issues. In turn, this has inspired and motivated these young artists to continue integrating important social issues into their work, well beyond the scope of the project; as one rapper said: “This project changed me in a political way; it taught me about the importance of freedom in society which I use in my work, whereas before I rapped about issues on the street, but not about politics”. The project also gave the artists a huge boost of confidence and an opportunity to develop themselves professionally with the support of a network of collaborative artists and with backing from CDFJ: they were able to develop and realise their own ideas, whether it was film, music or theatre, and to do so in a highly professional manner.

Furthermore, the project instilled in them a sense of ‘civic duty’ that is not common or widespread in Jordan: the concept of volunteerism, for example, barely exists in mainstream Jordanian culture. However, since taking part in the training and understanding the importance of the human rights-related issues, CDFJ – during but also well beyond the project – has been able to call upon the network to address key issues related to the freedom of information or human rights, and they have been consistently willing to address these issues, and have done so voluntarily, even contributing their own funds when necessary. Consequently, on ‘Freedom of the Press’ day, for example, CDFJ was able to draw upon the

talent and motivation of this network to put together rap songs, films and plays to spread key messages.

Equally, for the journalists who undertook a training separately from the artists, the training was an important milestone in their career. Many now wish to only focus on issues related to human rights and democracy, but lament the fact that there are insufficient newspapers interested – or courageous enough – to consistently address these issues. Some of the journalists felt that the training was necessary but insufficient: it lasted only three days and for many it was the first time that such journalists had encountered these fundamental issues. It also appears that CDFJ had to make some difficult decisions concerning how best to achieve their objectives: either select young journalists who may not have much journalistic experience to date in order to give them an opportunity to both further their careers and these important themes, or selected more well-seasoned journalists who may be less open to such themes, but may have an already well-established career and networks they can draw upon. To some extent, the preference for younger, less experienced journalists increased the impact on the participants, but reduced the impact on the wider audience – since they were less able to diffuse these ideas through their own professional networks. There was also scope, perhaps, to engage with university professors from journalism programmes and with a wide variety of media entities – not just journalists, but also radio and TV presenters, for example - which would have allowed CDFJ to reach a larger number of students than the 20 engaged in this project.

Linked to this issue is the concern that the 20 journalists and 20 Freedom Messengers were not always inter-linked enough through the course of the project; there was scope to more consistently invite the journalists, for example, who had been trained as part of the project to attend the multiple, cultural events organised by CDFJ. This was particularly important given the impression amongst stakeholders that journalists in Jordan in general do not seem interested in covering cultural events, nor events specifically focused on youth; consequently, many of the events organised by CDFJ in the context of this project were insufficiently covered by journalists. By linking these two groups together from the beginning – the journalists and the artists – it may have been possible to reach a greater number of people, and therefore maximise the impact of the project; some stakeholders felt that CDFJ also should have made more effort to invite prominent journalists and editors to their events. Furthermore, the project was also extremely Amman-centric (all members of the Freedom Messenger network lived in Amman when selected to participate), and did not make a significant effort to reach out to the regions, or to cover issues affecting people outside of the capital. This criticism has since been addressed, as will be discussed below. Lastly, while the artists were reluctant to be overly ‘steered’ by CDFJ, it could be interesting for the organisation to think through whether their impact could have been maximised by focusing on repealing a particular law or policy, rather than focusing on the whole gamut of human rights-related issues.

More broadly speaking, it is evidently difficult to speak about the impact of a project, which seeks to raise awareness about pressing social issues without doing a more concise study which compares the perceptions of the general public before and after the project. Many of the stakeholders engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation were certain that the impact had been significant and when asked to substantiate it, they pointed to the increasing interest amongst youth either to follow the path of the ‘Freedom Messengers’ by also infusing human rights into their own work, or to the content of on-line blogs which increasingly spoke about human rights and democracy-related issues.

However, of notable concern is the fact that the political context in Jordan has become significantly more restrictive since the beginning of the project. For example, in June 2013 the Government began using a press and publication law passed in 2012 to prevent the creation of any website without obtaining permission from the Government first, leading to 298 websites being banned. In 2015, the Government also passed a new ‘electronic crime’ law, containing article 11 on data law, which enables them to arrest journalists – and other individuals - critical of the Government on social media; CDFJ is working to assist ten journalists that were imprisoned in 2015. The organisation also cited many instances of anti-terrorism laws being used to restrict media freedom. Furthermore, CSOs must now prove that proposals for funding from foreign entities are in-line with Government strategies, and must receive approval from the Government before money can be received, leading some CSOs to miss opportunities to receive funding when approvals are not given. CDFJ has been active – and has engaged the Freedom Messengers – on all of these issues, certainly raising their visibility; it is too soon to say what impact this has had at the political level, nor is it possible to say whether there would have been more restrictions if CDFJ had been silent on these issues. What is clear is that media efforts such as these are vital in any democracy.

### *Sustainability issues*

The Freedom Messengers so far have been relatively sustainable, but efforts will be required to ensure it remains active in the months and years ahead. Following the extensive work undertaken in the context of the UNDEF project, CDFJ received support from the King Abdullah II Fund, enabling them to continue support for the Freedom Messengers. CDFJ, in recognition of the overly Amman-oriented nature of the project to date, has also begun trying to form Freedom Messenger networks in the regions throughout Jordan. Around 15 of the 20 original Freedom Messengers also remain actively involved in activities related to the projects original goals: one was hired to make a television show concerning human rights issues; many of the others are now training and mentoring other artists who wish to be involved in similar social and political issues; and, almost all remain willingly at the disposal of CDFJ and can be mobilised in support of diverse causes. However, in the long run, the network could benefit from some degree of formalisation, ideally independently of CDFJ to enable the network to be seen as an entity that can be drawn upon by other, even non-media affiliated entities, on social causes.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

As with the grantee in Lebanon, many concerns were raised by this grantee concerning the process and substance of the evaluation produced by Transtec, concerns that are largely shared by the UNDEF evaluator. Of principle concern is the fact that, despite having made himself available, the evaluators did not engage with the project manager during the course of the evaluation (who had since moved onto work with USAID, but who was as happy to engage with the Transtec evaluators as he was to engage with the UNDEF evaluator). The grantees also regret that they were given no opportunity to provide comments on the evaluation before it was published on-line. CDFJ is an effective and well-respected actor, which is not fully reflected in the evaluation. USAID *Civic Initiatives Support Program (implemented by FHI 360)* has been an active supporter of CDFJ since 2009. USAID *CIS Program* staff members interviewed assert that it is a highly respected and professional organization, and certainly a leader in the field of media and human rights.

While all projects can be improved upon, especially with hindsight, this evaluator disagrees largely with the findings of the Transtec evaluation and believes CDFJ should have been given the opportunity to respond prior to the evaluation being made public; consequently, the evaluator has requested UNDEF to consider removing the evaluation from the website, pending a review process with CDFJ. The issues concerning Transtec highlight the benefits of an evaluation approach focused on learning, rather than ‘audit’ – a belief underscored by CDFJ colleagues, too, who found the process with Transtec to be overly rigid. Lastly, in light of the increasing restrictions on civil society broadly, and on media freedom specifically, the importance of supporting media organisations such as CDFJ cannot be overstated in order to ensure the freedom of expression is protected as part of a commitment to democratic processes. Given the role of the UN and the access to Member States in New York, there is also scope for UNDEF to be playing a more active role in engaging in discreet dialogue with Governments or more active advocacy through the Secretary-General or the General Assembly, as the situation requires.

## **7. Case Study Seven: Women empowerment in Jordan, Tunisian and Egypt (UDF-11-434-RAS)**

*Overview: The Jordanian Center for Civic Education*

The Jordanian Center for Civic Education (JCCE) was established in Amman in August 2003. The Center aims to promote civic awareness amongst the Jordanian population, with a view to enable them to become active citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and those of others. The JCCE has partnerships with national and international organizations that aim to nurture and coordinate the efforts of individuals and entities working in the field of civic education and human rights. The JCCE has significant experience conducting training workshops in human rights, civic education, women political empowerment, advocacy and leaderships skills as well as dialogues, open forums and exchange programmes for school students, youth and women. JCCE has previously received funding from the EU, MEPI, SIDA and USAID.

The JCCE was awarded \$275,000 during Round Six in 2011, for a regional, two-year project implemented from 2013-2015 entitled, ‘Women empowerment in Jordan, Tunisia and Egypt. The project aimed to strengthen CSOs in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia, and to establish a network to promote women’s issues. The engagement focused on educating CSO members – both men and women – on human rights conventions, women’s rights in constitutions, and providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to form a network able to undertake advocacy and awareness campaigns that strengthen women’s rights and enhance democratic reforms. Consequently, the project aimed to achieve three key results: first, to increase knowledge among regional CSO members on women’s rights as well as leadership and advocacy skills; two, to strengthen capacities of women CSO members to improve their role in decision-making processes and local development; and, three, to establish a network through both real and virtual spaces to strengthen cooperation between Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan.

The project was motivated by research undertaken by JCCE which demonstrated that, as a result of the Arab Spring in 2011, women have been at the forefront of protests and democratic reform; however, following the initial surge of optimism concerning changes that would be brought about by the Arab Spring – especially with regards to women’s rights given their prominent role in fostering and sustaining the protests – political representation remains

low, and Muslim Fundamentalists seem intent on further restricting rather than supporting women's rights. Of particular concern, for example, women demonstrating in Tahir Square in March 2011 to commemorate International women's day were attacked by militant religious young men. The project was therefore conceptualised to address a broad range of issues related to the suppression of women and their rights. While the project took place in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia, due to the logistical constraints of this evaluation, field work only took place in Jordan and, consequently, this overview focuses predominantly on Jordan. It should also be noted that JCCE was the implementing partner as part of an UNDEF grant for a project entitled 'Engaging and empowering youth leaders in Jordan', in partnership with World Learning.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with JCCE*

The JCCE heard about UNDEF's call for proposal from their partner at World Learning. The JCCE appreciated UNDEF's collaborative and "understanding approach" to engaging with beneficiaries, and their flexibility regarding dealing with challenges or delays that arise in the course of project implementation. JCCE had already undergone a project design process similar to that of UNDEF with the EU, and so they found the process relatively simple; they were able to learn from the UNDEF reporting process, however, which differed from those they were used to. Moreover, it took the organisation some time to fully understand the "milestone" concept used by UNDEF, and so they made many mistakes during the project design process related to this process. While UNDEF assisted them with this aspect of project design, JCCE feels that – since UNDEF appears to be the only donor using this methodology – that more effort could be made to explain and clarify it.

JCCE confirmed the perceptions of other grantees in Jordan concerning the benefits of having UN funding compared to other donors: "the UN is more accepted than other organizations...when your project is funded by them, people come more willingly". Conversely, many stakeholders are weary of being involved in projects supported by bilateral actors, and even funding from the EU created some problems. The support from the UN also gave the organisation its first real experience of working at the regional level, paving the way for the organisation to be better known in other Middle Eastern countries but also for the organisation to make strategic partnerships with actors across the region who share their goals. The regional nature of the project was an important asset, JCCE believes: "while we are all Arabs, we have very different traditions and cultures; the project enabled us to understand one another better".

#### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The scope and modalities of this project were impressive: they successfully brought together 8 men and women from each country in the project, representing 24 different CSO organisations on human rights, advocacy, campaigning and building coalitions. Those trained then went back to their own communities and organised three awareness-raising sessions in each country, attended by a total of 2400 men and women. The representatives were then reunited to undertake training on civic education, and to design action plans for related projects in their own communities. The best action plans, which were largely focused on advocacy campaigns, were then given small grants to enable implementation – two projects in each country in total. The focus of the advocacy campaign was decided by the participants themselves: in Jordan, they focused on women's political empowerment in Al Karak and women's rights to inheritance and domestic violence in Al Mafrq; in Egypt, they focused on

a pre-marriage habilitation in Al Geeza Governorate, undertaken in four key areas; and in Tunisia, they focused on underage female workers in Al Sillianah and ElKef. Most interventions involved both field studies to understand perceptions and awareness-levels, followed by debates and awareness-raising sessions, roundtable tables, meetings with community leaders and influencers, and workshops – depending on the context, and specific strategy decided upon by the CSOs.

The major focus of the project was changing the mind-set of men, and empowering women; JCCE underscored the nature of the challenges faced by women in the Middle East: “We live in a patriarchal society where men are raised to think they are superior to women and have to remain in control”. While they believe that the role of women in Jordan, for example, has changed in recent decades, given the low participation of women in Parliament and the fact that the majority of women in rural areas do not work, they are adamant that much remains to be done. As a result, JCCE made significant efforts to include an equal number of men and women in their project, but also to ensure that it was male trainers, who convey the message to other men – what they called a “man to man approach”. They were also extremely precise in terms of who they targeted; for the project on domestic violence, for example, they targeted policemen (since they receive complaints about domestic violence); lawyers (since they receive cases about domestic violence); policy-makers (who are evidently able to effect change at the national level); teachers (since often students may be dealing with difficult situations at home) and with Muslim and Christian religious leaders who have influence amongst their congregations. A similar strategy was used in Jordan for the project on inheritance rights for women. Focus groups conducted in Jordan demonstrated some impressive results.

Men engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation admitted to being reluctant to join the project at the beginning, predominantly because culture and traditions dominate the way they think and behave – especially since the majority of the participants come from relatively marginalised and secluded parts of the country. As one man stated:

*“prior to the project, women were insignificant to me, they were not an active part of society. We have a domesticated view of women – she is a mother, a maid, etc., but no more. However, with time, we came to realise that women have the right to speak, and work, and to become an active part of society”.*

For another participant, the project gave him cause to reflect on the ways his sisters had been treated differently to him when they were growing up: “I would watch my sister cry, but only now do I realise how much they had their rights denied, and how much I upset them – I have apologised to them”, he said. All male participants emphasised that in their relationships, and for their families things would now be different thanks to the project: “male children typically receive more attention and more love, but I will be sure to give equal attention to both; I want to raise them to feel equal and to express their opinions equally”.

The women were empowered by the training on inheritance rights, as it gave them the confidence to stand up for themselves and to feel justified in doing so. Prior to the project, the majority of participants knew that they have inheritance rights, but they did not feel that they could embrace these rights. As one woman said: “I was raised to believe that men are superior and have more rights to inheritance than I do: but, why should I be denied of my right, especially if I want to educate myself or want something better for my children?”. Many women are even threatened to give up their inheritance if they do claim it or, because

they were “married off”, the family believes that the money will simply end up in the hands of the husband, who is not even *really* part of the family. As a result of the workshops, many of the women decided to fight for their inheritance; one woman said: “Without the workshop I would never have had the idea to keep the money, nor to use it for my education; I am grateful for the project as otherwise I would have been married off”. As a result of the project, women were also encouraged to talk to police officers, law makers and other influencers if they face cases of domestic violence.

It is unclear what kind of impact the project had at a national level; changing laws and policies evidently takes time – certainly more than two years - especially on such sensitive issues. It is clear, however, that for the direct beneficiaries of the project in Jordan (since this evaluation can only really speak about the results in Jordan and not Egypt or Tunisia), the project had a profound impact on their lives. Given that the grantee employed an extensive communications strategy, targeting national press, local newspapers, inviting senior figures to the final conference, social media etc. – we can imagine that the changes to mind-sets went beyond those directly engaged in the project. Potentially, with time and with more work on these vital issues, the changes will be more profound.

While the methodology and approach of the grantee was extremely constructive, the project raised some concerns related to the security of beneficiaries. In Tunisia, for example, the grantee states that a meeting was “ruined in Jandouba by the Salafists” because it was a mixed meeting; also in Egypt, meetings took place amongst riots provoked by the Islamic Brotherhood. It is not evident from the project document or from the narrative reports that sufficient attention was paid to elaborating a ‘conflict-sensitive’ approach that also protects the security of those involved. Another concern, which is perhaps more of a recommendation, concerns the issue of women’s empowerment specifically: while having women and men together, and having ‘man-to-man’ trainings, it would also have been beneficial to have ‘women to women’ trainings, focused specifically on empowerment as part of the programme, and not just on rights.

#### *Sustainability issues*

Many of the CSOs involved in the project have continued their efforts on their respective projects since it forms part of the work of the CSO in question. However, without funding, it is difficult to ensure that activities will be continued. It is evident that a significant amount of momentum was generated by the projects, and it will be a shame for these activities not to continue, with more focus paid to other actors and changing laws and policies at the national level. It is also not clear how the network of CSOs established by JCCE – which brings together like-minded CSOs from Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan will be able to continue joint work without additional support.

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

Many elements of this project form “best practice” in terms of engagement with women and projects related to women’s rights; it is evident that the results of this project have been significantly more profound than other women-empowerment projects that fail to engage men, or which fail to engage the *right* men. Ensuring other UNDEF grantees, including those already working on women’s issues, but also those that are considering applying to UNDEF, are made aware of these approaches and the benefits in terms of results is vital. However, the project also raises two other key issues: to what extent are CSOs

encouraged by UNDEF to take on board security concerns and integrate conflict-sensitive approaches when working in complex environments? And, to what extent is two-years a realistic timeframe within which to create fundamental mind-set changes, that lead in turn to more profound, sustainable cultural changes?

### **III. Asia-Pacific**

#### **8. Case Study Eight: Youth as agents of democratic change through knowledge and information acquisition and exchange in Laos (UDF-10-385-LAO)**

*Overview: The Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC)*

The Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC) is an indigenous, all-Lao organization committed to making a unique and distinctive contribution to the development of Laos. PADETC's work is based on the principles of education for sustainable development – which balances the principles and goals of social development, economic development and environmental harmony. PADETC has worked for over twenty years in innovative agriculture and participatory community development projects in rural areas. PADETC's key areas of work are: capacity-building for organizations; service delivery through learning centers and networks; and leadership and advocacy. There are seven learning centers and networks, namely ThaTeng Organic, Eco-rice fish farming, Eco-Forestry Park, Holistic Education School, Media for Development. The networks are: Soaban Shop (village handicrafts), Buddhism Monk for Development and Youth Development. The seven entities all report to PADETC's Head Office which oversees coordination and quality control.

PADETC was awarded \$200,000 in Round 5 in 2010 for a project that ran from 2012 to 2014, and which was entitled 'Youth as agents of democratic change through knowledge and information acquisition and exchange in Laos'. The objective of the project is to develop the capacity of youth groups to engage in democratic, participatory processes regarding the management and use of natural resources using information and communication technology to narrow the urban-rural divide in six provinces in Laos. The project was designed to assist young people to document local sustainable practices and bio-diversity preservation, and to incorporate these into the education system. It also aimed to encourage youth volunteers to conduct simple action research and dialogue with communities on land-use patterns and ownership to influence policies and practices. The project was implemented in partnership with the country's Ministry of Education and Sports.

The project was motivated by analysis conducted by PADETC, which demonstrates that in the one-party, autocratic state of Laos, people are deterred from meaningful participation in society. In 2009 the Government formally allowed associations to work in development, which led to an increasing number of CSOs being actively involved in government-related community development work at all levels. The project was designed to encourage youth groups across Laos – the majority of which have already worked with PADETC - to embrace new ways of participating in development and democratic issues. This is particularly relevant with regards to land and natural resources, where peoples' livelihoods are often significantly affected; the Government, however, does not accept direct public challenges or questions outside of government-approved channels, reducing the opportunities for rural communities to engage in the decisions that affect their lives. However, PADETC is able to use the government's Social Economic Development Plan as a framework for action, which allows for some tailoring to the local context. The project was therefore designed to:

increase the analytical and media skills of youth in the fields of bio-diversity preservation and land management; enable youth to participate in sustainable development policy-making at the provincial, district and village levels; and, to help integrate bio-diversity preservation and land management issues into the education curriculum in select schools.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with PADECT*

UNDEF is, according to PADECT relatively unknown in Laos – an assertion reflected in the low number of applications received and granted. The PADECT Director found the process of designing the project document extremely useful, to the extent that he has returned to this ‘model’ when writing proposals for other organizations. They found the process of working with UNDEF during the project document writing phase to be less that of supervisory guidance, mentoring or coaching, however, and more a series of short briefings on what was expected of the organization. PADECT staff also felt that there were certain elements missing from the UNDEF process, concerning organizational management and leadership, for example, which go beyond the issues highlighted by the elaboration of the logical framework.

For PADECT, the UN also serves as a bridge between Member States and civil society, so it is well-placed to support collaborative interactions between these two entities. Given the sensitivities of working with international actors in the Laos context, PADECT appreciated UNDEF’s flexibility regarding the use of the logo and ‘banner’ when engaging with communities, or in the context of events and trainings for example. The communities in Laos, PADECT insists, are less interested to know who is funding a given project, and are more interested in conveying their needs and understanding how those needs will be met. PADECT underscored, therefore, that the comparative advantage of UN funding over that of other bilateral actors is less significant in the Laos context, since donor visibility generally speaking is not insisted upon – not least since it can be counter-productive to the achievement of the stated goals.

#### *Impact on beneficiaries*

This project highlights some of the acute challenges encountered by civil society actors in some of the countries where UNDEF is working. In Laos, CSOs are not able to work independently of the Government, and must consistently ensure that their projects are aligned with Government objectives. The context in which this project was designed, furthermore, was very different from the one in which the project was implemented; shortly after the project began, PADECT’s founder, Mr. Sombath Somphone, disappeared, and there has been no news of him since despite intense efforts by local and international actors alike to investigate what happened. It is not believed that the disappearance was tied directly to the UNDEF project. However, in light of this alarming event, it became increasingly difficult for PADECT and other CSOs to operate. Furthermore, in the Laos context it is not always possible to speak directly about human rights, nor about advocacy *per se* which are considered ‘Western’ topics that have been imported; such concepts have to be raised indirectly through innovative project design.

The approach taken by PADECT, therefore, in light of these multiple challenges, was to use the *process* of the project to educate youth about the elements of a democratic process by educating them to understand how to analyse a problem and present solutions collaboratively that are in-line with cultural and social practices i.e. experiential learning. Consequently, 60 youth leaders were trained on data collection, baseline surveys, and rights-

based development; they were also taught how to undertake community land-use mapping and zoning of natural resources. These youth leaders went onto train youth members of their respective groups, and encouraged them to undertake analyses of problems in their own communities related to biodiversity, forestry, land management, etc. During this period, over 90 field practicums were implemented in six provinces. As a result of this engagement, six communities went onto discuss the ideas and potential solutions presented by the youth, and to think through ways in which the ideas could be integrated into the Village Development Plans. Youth were consequently given ‘hands on’ practice of a bottom-up, analytical and participatory community-based development process. PADECT labelled this as a “soft” approach to encouraging local and provincial authorities to take on board the views of community members - an approach which is more constructive in the Laos context than more direct, advocacy approaches.

In addition to the elements of the project that were focused on youth specifically, the project also paid significant attention to “indigenous knowledge (IK)”, with a view to ensuring it is passed onto future generations by integrating it into school curriculums. Youth were taught to respect IK and to find ways to use it to address pressing problems. To better support the inclusion of IK in curriculums, teachers were trained on how best to integrate this into their teaching, and community leaders and monks were trained on how best to convey their knowledge to youth. The interlinking processes of training youth leaders, having youth leaders train youth, having youth implement their knowledge and ensuring teachers and local leaders are able to convey their knowledge was encapsulated and distributed through YouTube videos, comic books for children and social media. ICT was consequently featured in the project, albeit in a relatively marginal way given that ICTs are not widely used outside of the capital, especially in rural areas.

The purpose of the project, therefore, was to give youth a ‘model’ for how to present their ideas, back their ideas up with data and analysis, and present them to local officials – a relatively innovative approach in a country where the state does not actively seek or consistently welcome feedback, especially not from the youth. Simultaneously the project was designed to foster greater respect for indigenous knowledge, as well as for the environment and natural resources. Logistical and communication problems with the grantee, combined with the fact that the project was completed over two years ago and the visit by the evaluator took place during holidays, prevented direct engagement with the youth – so it is difficult to validate the extent to which these ideas were absorbed by and used by the youth. Despite requests by the evaluator, visits with community members or local leaders were also not part of the in-country schedule, so their views of the project and the impact the youth’s ideas had on them could also not be substantiated.

However, youth leaders and trainers engaged in the project, felt that the project had important, albeit subtle impacts on the youth – many of whom had not engaged in such participatory, needs-based processes before. The effects of the training were accentuated by the fact that there was equal gender balance between girls and boys in the project, emphasising therefore the fact that boys and girls should participate equally in such processes. Furthermore, local and provincial authorities attended the presentations by the youth and agreed to consider how their ideas on natural resource management can be better integrated into policies and actions. Moreover, many of those interviewed felt that the value of the training is that the knowledge can also be passed on from the youth to their families, expanding the impact of the valorisation of indigenous knowledge in the communities.

However, some obstacles – beyond the contextual-related challenges already mentioned – were highlighted by trainers and youth leaders. First, youth leaders lamented that students would only engage in activities “if we were leading them” – emphasising the extent to which youth would also benefit from more basic empowerment activities which encourage them to value their own ideas and actions; however, the point also underscores the fact that participants were relatively young, and still enrolled in school and could perhaps not necessarily be expected to undertake a vast amount of activities without guidance. Second, while the youth did elaborate many potential solutions to problems identified around biodiversity issues, these strategies could not be implemented due to a lack of funds; such funds for grass-roots initiatives had not been included in the budget. Third, since youth leaders change frequently, it could not be guaranteed the knowledge passed on through the training would necessarily continue to reach the youth, and new youth leaders are not always made aware of the project. Fourth, the project was geographically ambitious for such a small organisation in such a large country; rather than having activities in all six provinces, it may have been better to focus on one or two provinces, with a view to creating models, which the government could then choose to replicate in other provinces. Lastly, there was no agreement with the government on integrating bio-diversity, land management and IK issues into the curriculum more broadly i.e. beyond the schools directly engaged in the project, missing an opportunity to ensure greater sustainability of the concept.

#### *Sustainability issues*

As mentioned above, the sustainability of the initiative is relatively problematic. While the youth were motivated to implement their knowledge, without small funding it was impossible for them to do so. Furthermore, while the youth will pass their knowledge onto their families, given their young age it is not clear that they will necessarily feel empowered to do so outside of the classroom setting, which in the Laos context remains relatively traditional and not especially interactive i.e. students are not necessarily expected to participate actively and to share their own learning, but to absorb the learning of their teachers (and perhaps, their parents). While some activities were integrated into a project funded by GIZ, it would have been helpful to engage the Government in discussions about how to integrate these into the curriculum at a national level, using the schools where the project was conducted as a pilot project. The ability to take this approach, however, was undermined by the difficult context in which the project was elaborated, and the cultural difficulties with being perceived to directly request activities of the Government which were not solicited.

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

The Laos context is one of the most complex environments for UNDEF to try to support civil society. Far from shying away from such experiences, it is important for UNDEF to support innovative programming in such contexts, and to foster greater learning of how to create greater participation in a one-party state. There is also scope for cross-country learning: Rwanda, for example, while very different from the Laos context in many ways, exhibits some similar challenges. Efforts to foster “democracy” at the local level, however, have been relatively successful and many in Laos would benefit from an exchange of lessons from such contexts. Tailoring would be an important element of such an approach, but South-South learning opportunities are certainly missing from the UNDEF engagement.

Furthermore, the Laos context and the disappearance of the founder of PADECT had an important “chilling effect” on the work of all CSOs and donor engagements. The sensitivity of international support for CSOs in these complex political contexts is underscored by this example; it merits greater discussion amongst UNDEF and partners at the HQ level – especially with the Board of Advisors concerning what actions, if any, can be taken under such circumstances. To what extent is UNDEF positioned to raise such issues with key human rights entities within the UN System, as well as with Member States? What knowledge can already be garnered from working in the Laos context for over four years that would be of use to other donors, and other potential grantees?

#### **9. Case Study Nine: Lao encouraging and applying democracy for civil society (UDF-11-453-LAO)**

*Overview: Kenan Foundation Asia (Kenan Foundation Asia (known operationally as Kenan Institute Asia)) and the Rural Research and Development Promoting Knowledge Association (RRDPA)*

Kenan is a knowledge and capacity-building organization implementing results-oriented, social and economic development programming on a not-for-profit basis. Headquartered in Bangkok, Kenan conducts activities in Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as regional activities in Southeast Asia. Kenan approaches key development challenges in the region through an innovative, market-based approach that seeks to harness the resources and expertise of the private sector, as well as the experience and knowledge of both public and civil society sectors to address key issues related to business and economic development, education, and public health. Kenan provides its corporate, government and multilateral clients with a wide range of services, including: consulting, project design, management and implementation, training and research.

Kenan Foundation Asia was awarded \$250,000 in a second round of funding from UNDEF for a two-year follow-up project - awarded in Round 6 (2011) - which ran from 2013 to 2015. The project, entitled ‘Lao encouraging and applying democracy for civil society (Phase II/Lead II), was designed to enable meaningful participation of CSOs in decision-making in Lao society by building advocacy capacity and encouraging engagement with local and national leaders. The project focused on increasing the capacity of CSOs to advocate on behalf of their beneficiaries and by providing increased opportunities to encourage CSOs to engage with the Government or communities in constructive dialogue on issues of relevance to beneficiaries. Kenan partnered with a local implementing entity, called the Rural Research and Development Promoting Knowledge Association (RRDPA). RRDPA, formerly known as the Rural Research Development Training Center (RRDTC), is a small, Vientiane-based non-profit association, that develops capacity for rural, ethnic communities with a view to reducing poverty, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

The project focused on increasing the impact of CSOs on local and national decision-making, building upon LEAD I, which was designed to enhance capacity-building more broadly by developing leadership skills and promoting institutional capacity-building. The project was designed to address two specific issues preventing CSOs in Laos from effectively engaging in advocacy in support of beneficiaries: lack of knowledge and capacity on effective advocacy techniques; and, lack of opportunity amongst the local CSO community to understand and practice advocacy in pursuit of effective positive change for beneficiaries. Consequently, the project’s objectives were threefold: increase the knowledge and capacity

of CSOs to engage in advocacy-related activities; create increased opportunities for CSOs to successfully engage with government and communities in order to develop understanding of the importance of advocacy as a tool; and, build trust between government and CSOs to help promote advocacy. The approach of the project was oriented towards case study-based training on knowledge and skills, and mentoring throughout an implementation phase.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with Kenan*

Given Kenan's extensive expertise of working with international entities and bilateral donors, the guidance process did not have any significant impact in terms of learning for the organization and nor were the insights from this technical process passed onto the implementation agency. Generally speaking, Kenan found the process significantly less burdensome than that of other international donors, and they appreciated the simplicity/easy-to-use format of the logical framework in particular. While they felt that UNDEF and Kenan broadly shared the same goals, they underscored the difficulty of fully getting to know a donor when face-to-face visits are so few and far between/non-existent. From their perspective, the small team at UNDEF Headquarters is beneficial from a cost perspective (given its small size and 'footprint'), but one of the biggest drawbacks relates to forming relationships with grantees and helping ensuring effective implementation of the projects.

From the perspective of small organizations (such as the implementing partner, for example), Kenan believes that UNDEF should switch to a three year-funding cycle, with the possibility of a second round of funding. Given the enormous resources required for a small entity to invest in developing a proposal with UNDEF, and to then implement it – rather than applying for grants with other entities, for example – a three to six-year funding cycle with a mid-process evaluation would balance the need for checks and balances, with UNDEF's desire to have a meaningful impact.

#### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The Non-Profit Association (NPA) component of the project focused on training and mentoring; between 26 and 34 NPA representatives were trained in diverse concepts, including: issue identification, community leadership, communications and dialogue, relationship/coalition building and negotiation. Stakeholders were then trained in how to apply for a grant – a skill they will be able to use well beyond the timeframe of the project. They were encouraged to apply for grants (to Kenan) related to the themes of the training, and advocacy in particular; certain projects were then selected and sub-grantees were awarded a small grant in order to enable project implementation. During the project design and implementation phase, NPAs were offered mentoring services from Kenan staff, who provided over 50 mentoring related activities to 16 projects, with each project receiving around \$6,000-8,000 as part of the UNDEF grant. These diverse projects – targeting poverty-related issues and marginalised groups - indirectly benefited thousands of people in both urban and rural communities.

At the heart of the approach used in this project was engaging with the Government as a development partner. CSOs were trained to be able to engage effectively with Government and, in turn, Government was given a direct role in the project. This is particularly important in the Laos context where even the term "Non-Governmental Organization" has extremely negative connotations, almost equating with being "anti-government" (consequently such entities are referred to as Non-Profit Associations, not NGOs). To overcome the lack of trust, at different parts of the process, Government (Ministry of Home Affairs/MOHA)

representatives and NPAs were brought together – either for trainings, or as part of scheduled visits where Government representatives would perform the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). In order to be able to perform this role, NPAs and MOHA representatives engaged in a joint training exercise on monitoring and evaluation objectives and techniques. These constructive state-society interactions were designed to foster greater trust, and potentially lead to greater freedoms for CSOs to operate.

NPAs engaged with for the purposes of this evaluation greatly appreciated the trainings received by Kenan and RRDPA. They pointed especially to the trainings on proposal writing and project management, which they have been able to use when engaging with other donors, thereby giving them greater access to funds, and networking opportunities. With the small funds obtained during the course of this project, the NPAs were also able to implement a wide range of highly relevant livelihoods-associated projects, including those related to clean water, animal-raising, women’s economic empowerment, toilet facilities for children, organic farming, etc., amongst others. The approach used during these projects enabled NPAs to “listen to local people’s problems and to find appropriate solutions”, while still being in line with the priorities of the Government. This empowered communities to “learn to standby themselves” in terms of livelihood and development, enabling them to address problems that affect their own lives and livelihoods. During final presentations, Government representatives were also able to get a deeper understanding of the type of work the NPA’s are conducting, and of their operational capacity.

A few problems concerning the project, however, were raised during interactions with NPAs. Firstly, none of the CSOs interviewed for this evaluation were able to discuss issues related to advocacy, and none of them could recall having been trained in this concept and/or none of them were willing to discuss the concept with the evaluator; Kenan notes that training was provided in issue identification, community leadership, communications and dialogue, relationship- and coalition-building, and negotiation under the heading of “Advocacy capacity building”, but no participants were able to define advocacy or its purpose when engaged with by the evaluator. There are three possible reasons for the inability to articulate the concept: a lack of understanding about the term; conceptual and/or language issues around the term; and/or, that NPAs were keen to avoid commenting on this sensitive topic, given the relationship between NPAs and Government regarding advocacy for policy change. It was impossible during the short visit to ascertain which reason is most likely but, when pushed, definitions of advocacy or of the training tended to sound more like “community development projects,” rather than advocacy *per se*. These findings are supported by Kenan’s final evaluation that highlight that 69% - rather than 95% - had increased knowledge of advocacy following the trainings and that only 56% of the applications received had realistic advocacy strategies, whereas most of the projects related to poverty reduction and philanthropy.

Second, many of those interviewed complained about language issues; the majority of the trainings were conducted either in Thai or in English. There are significant similarities between Lao and Thai, but beneficiaries complained that when trainings were conducted in Thai “much was lost in translation,” and when trainings were conducted in English “much time was lost” as a result of the necessity for translation. Third, the majority of beneficiaries felt that the trainings were too short. Almost all trainings were two days long, with a first day focused on theory and a second on practice. Given the complexity of many of the topics presented, the language issues, and the fact that capacity in Laos is extremely low, it seems that two days was insufficient. Lastly, those NPAs that do not have a license/permit – despite

having applied several years ago – were not allowed to present to Government officials at the final conference, creating some feelings of injustice, since they had participated equally in the project – despite Kenan’s efforts to ensure they were represented, again pointing to the extremely complex context in which CSOs work in Laos. NPAs presence in the project at all can be considered a significant achievement given the extreme sensitivity around the issue of NPA, so the negative feelings generated amongst NPAs not able to participate in the final presentation point, perhaps therefore, to insufficiently-managed expectations. The evaluator notes that Kenan engaged in an intensive and sustained process with the government in order to be able to include the NPAs, and it should be noted that Kenan values the important work being undertaken by the NPAs.

Some of these issues point to broader concerns about the way the project was framed. Rather than being about Government-related advocacy in the traditionally and commonly understood way - which the Project Document states would lead to policy changes at the national level - The Kenan Institute project could be framed more solidly as being about *community empowerment* through engagement with local government representatives and communities or about local-level advocacy; consequently, there are therefore some conceptual, framing issues related to the project and the Project Document. For example, the project states that the program “will have wide-ranging benefits at local and national levels of government, and across the national legal and regulatory framework”. This is a very ambitious goal, and there is no evidence to suggest that changes occurred as a result of this project at the national level in terms of the legal and regulatory framework. This is not to say that the project had no impacts; but those impacts were felt at the local level e.g. one project created new funding sources for inclusive education in schools; another encouraged local government officials to broadcast public health messages over the village loudspeaker; some community members were able to access aid for their duck and fish raising projects; and some marginalized groups were able to sell goods in markets previously closed-off to them. These impacts are important but are felt at the *local, community level*, as a result of *local stakeholder empowerment* and do not constitute changes at the national level, neither in legal nor regulatory terms.<sup>5</sup>

Given the political context in Laos, it is also questionable whether advocacy is the right goal – not least since the Government is not necessarily open to being *persuaded*, or even significantly influenced by typical advocacy strategies at the local level, even if (as evidenced above) *local* government representatives engage with local communities to address local-level concerns. The Government involvement in the project – and the approach used to bring them on board – does not, again, concern advocacy in the traditional sense of the word, but more specifically concerns *trust-building*. Those interviewed at Kenan, and as evidenced by the findings in the final report, suggest that trust was increased by the project – a very important – and meaningful - result. However, since advocacy rather than trust was outlined as the major objective in the project document, there is no data – however anecdotal – to back

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Kenan disagrees with this criticism of the programme, since the achievements made were multiple and because: “Where changes at the Government level occurred as a result of the project, these are reflected by the fact that Government representatives were visiting project sites, meeting and engaging with CSOs, and observing and monitoring CSO activities. This represents action on the part of the Government that would not have occurred without the advocacy efforts of the project.” Beyond these actions on the part of the Government, however, the evaluator was not able to ascertain any national level changes in the policy or regulatory framework. The main criticism of the project, therefore, remains the framing of it in the project document – which outlines a more ambitious project than the one that was implemented. This not to say that the results were not meaningful, nor that the project was without impacts. Far from it – but those impacts were felt at the local level predominantly, and no significant changes at the national level could be ascertained. Again, local level projects are just as important, so this remains a question of framing. Changes that occurred with government behavior appear to have occurred predominantly at the local level. It would take more time than the evaluator has available to her to resolve this difference of opinion regarding the framing of the project as a “national level advocacy project” versus a “local level community empowerment project with significant local government involvement”.

up this claim. Lastly, there are some concerns about the approach used to bring the Government on board, despite the note-worthy objective of building trust: Government was requested to play an M&E role with regards to the projects implemented by NPAs; this “monitoring” role seems contrary to the objectives of advocacy, where it is the government which learns from civil society – adapting its laws and policies in accordance with these engagements, rather than the other way around.

### *Sustainability*

The project appears to have increased the capacity of NPAs in certain key areas, especially with regards to proposal writing and donor engagement. Following the project, many of the NPAs decided to form a consortium and apply for funding from the EU. Consequently, the project had the combined impact of creating new funding opportunities, and creating greater collaboration between NPAs – both of which are excellent outcomes. The sustainability – and indeed the impact – of the project could be further enhanced by ensuring follow-up with the Government on the individual projects being implemented, or an arrangement whereby those projects that were particularly appreciated by the Government could receive financial support in order to continue their activities. Lastly, in order for all stakeholders involved to learn from the project, it would be helpful if Kenan could translate and distribute the evaluation conducted by Transtec – which Kenan colleagues agreed was largely an accurate reflection of the project.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

As outlined in the previous case study on PADECT, the Laos context is extremely challenging. Designing projects that are socially-, culturally- and politically-acceptable, but which are also likely to contribute to a strengthened civil society and more constructive state-civil society interactions is a challenge – not least since capacity in Laos remains extremely low. Kenan found a useful way of strengthening capacity at the local level and with more time spent in trainings and mentoring, with more CSOs involved, there is hope that greater participation could eventually lead to some changes at the national level. The problems of framing outlined above certainly do not undermine the results achieved or the potential for such a model to achieve more substantial outcomes. It should also be noted, however, that given the international standing of Kenan, it benefitted significantly less from the support of an entity such as UNDEF whose comparative advantage is its ability to fund small, lesser known entities who are likely to take advantage of the technical skills imparted to them during the guidance process, and also able to benefit significantly from the UN ‘brand’ in a way that international, or regional, entities do not.

## **10. Case Study Ten: Right to Women’s Political Representation in Sri Lanka (UDF-SRL-13-571)**

*Overview: The International Movement Against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR Asia Committee) fostering women participation in politics*

Sri Lanka has one of the largest gender gaps in the South-Asian region. Despite the fact that the country elected the first woman Prime Minister in the world in 1960, that women’s literacy rate is higher than in other south Asian countries, and that women are the major

contributors to country's foreign exchange earnings, they are marginalised from social and political participation and their political representation in the Parliament is 5.8%.

The leader of IMADR is an active Human Rights defender with a long trajectory in denouncing HR violations and promoting CSOs participation in governance in the country. She attracts significant media attention, and has been questioned on the inability of people affiliated with CSOs to win elections.

The project was designed to address the marginalization of women in the country, the patriarchal character of culture and institutions, and aggression towards women. The goal of the project is part of a long-term strategy, initiated in 2007, to foster a process of empowerment of women at all levels of society. The strategy of the project focused on fostering an innovative training process that involve theoretical knowledge and experience-sharing at national and international levels; the training targeted a group of women that belong to political parties at central, district and local levels, and different kind of CSOs on democracy, good governance, gender equality and peace building initiatives. Trained women were then asked to replicate the content of the training.

An advocacy process was also undertaken with political institutions, the state and CSOs to foster the participation of women in the State by defining, by law, a quota of participation of women at central, district and local levels. A third component has also been implemented by providing support to women willing to participate and engage in politics at all levels, by empowering them through training, capacity building and sharing of experiences.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with IMADR*

The relationship with UNDEF is considered positive, and the guidance process is mentioned as a learning tool that allowed them to design a better project, as well as the promptness and easier of communication. As one CSO representative stated: “we started with a concept and then, when it was accepted, we developed the project. UNDEF supported us to transform the proposal into a good project. And it made sure since the beginning that we had a good project. In the management of the project, my experience is that they were very helpful; I worked with 2 officers. We are very far away but they were very quick to respond and answer our questions. I did not feel that we were far away.”

In particular, the guidance process is considered quite useful by the CSO, as it obliged them to transform the idea into a practical path, which benefitted the implementation of the project. Also in this case, and the majority of cases investigated during the evaluation, it appears clearly that the guidance process is a major asset for UNDEF's work, which – while requiring a significant time investment on their part is highly valued by grantees and perceived as a strengthening tool, for the project and the CSO in general. “The learning process for me was that we were emotionally involved with the idea and they asked questions as a donors and this helped us to think on how to concrete the idea in a practice.” The grantee continued: “I understand that the project had to be fine tuned because we were promoting an idea.”

The guidance process is not only considered useful for designing the project, but also during the implementation phase, and because of the effort spent to transform the CSO idea into action, the implementation become clear and easier to operate. As such, it is something

that characterize the work of UNDEF to such an extent that it should be considered a service that can be provided not only to grantees, but to CSOs in general.

Furthermore, some parts of the guidance process were adopted by the CSO and included in their activities: “They taught me to question everything and I am still using that approach. I am not the person that writes the projects, but in the work, I became the one that formulates the questions, and since I saw that it can help, I am using it because it is useful and I refer to some of the UNDEF criteria to do that. It gave us a good guide.”

The fact that UNDEF, as a member of the UN family, is the funder of the project benefitted the grantee during implementation and provided a political umbrella that allowed the CSO to operate and gain respect and trust. In Sri Lanka, at the time of the negotiation of the project, human right defenders and CSOs were under threat by the Government, and the majority had to left the country. The leader of the CSO remained in the country and continued to denounce human rights violations, so she was politically exposed and the relationship with UNDEF, it can be argued, was beneficial for her safety too.

The CSO head said: “To be honest, I thought that the government would not accept the project because we were under threat from it, but it helped politically and they knew that I had UN support. In reality it added a political support also to the project. It gave us credibility. We also could not and did not want to have a political role, but to give skills to women and engage women in politics, and to have a political position would have been dangerous, but also worthless and could harm the project. Maybe I would like to have UNDP with us not for milestone event but for political support. I am sure that they would have learned more from us than us from them, but it could have been helpful for the project.”

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The project is still underway at the moment of the evaluation but the results obtained during the visit are outstanding. In general terms, the 25% quota of women participation in local government has been already achieved and negotiation are undergoing to elevate the quota at district and central level. The beneficiaries elaborated: “because of the training we learned how to be systematical in our political careers. As a result of this training I was able to raise our voices as women, asking policy-makers to ensure that more women participated in politics. As a result of this project, we can see that 25% of quota has been achieved and I attribute this to this project.”

But it is in the process of empowerment of women where the evaluator felt the richness of the outputs and outcomes what had been achieved. For instance, it benefitted the women that participated at individual level and the best way to understand and transmit these results is hearing what they have to say:

- “They have lost the fear to come forward and participate. They have been trusted by the academy and are more open to the concept. They met people with similar problems so it was also a team building exercise. They got confidence from the others that they met and that they can go and raise at the parliament level.”
- “The project is meaningful for the country because it’s encouragement for women to participate, not only in elections, but also within the society. Even though you are not

elected, you can do something and become a leader in your community, and this is what happened with a lot of us.”

- “I participated in these activities from the beginning, I had only community leadership when I started. My capacity was developed and I am becoming a provincial leader, I understood what politics was about, I learned about the constitution and international politics and feminism. I had more strength to apply for nomination. It gave me a little bit of encouragement to feel that I can be a good political leader. I am the first woman to be elected in my local government and this is one victory. I have also won an award for the best administrative context in my district, as the best administrator. I had also get the opportunity to be a leader for other women and provided them with skills and knowledge that I learnt here. So it is not only for me. I also noted, that since then, the government is asking my help in coordinating and networking with NGO and my leadership is recognized. Within our women there is consensus that women must participate more strongly in local politics and my expectation for the future is that I want to win the next election and become the chairman of the local council. I showed that I can compete with men anytime and in any moment.”
- “This is the only process which bring all women from all political parties and very formally to provide this kind of leadership to women. In a country that was divided politically and ethnically, we as a team have been together facing all political challenges and we have been able to make this project a success.”
- “We faced the challenge of democracy in Sri Lanka. We had to intervene to promote democracy because the former regime was authoritarian. Because of violence, democracy was attacked and we had to protect democracy and part of the women dealt with this issue. Part of democracy is campaign and demonstration and I participated in those and the answer from the government was violent, but it is important to have this campaigns ... What I was to emphasis is that this is training was given space to politics and democracy and not only leadership trainings but a lot of political analysis.”

The activism of the beneficiaries in their communities were able to achieve other outcomes that were beneficial to a larger number of women and men; for example:

- “(The project brought visible change in my community) because 10,000 women did not have income generation and activities and we help them by lobbying with the banks and now 7,000 women are engaged in economic activities. Women are better entrepreneurs than men. I could mobilize the western provincial council to give sewing machines for around 6.5 millions for free to women to foster the economic. Knowledge and skills are useful for this kind of things and I learned from the project.”
- “They could obtain the law to have the quota of 25% in local government by the parliament and this was given by the strength they had to push for this and this was given by the work from the academy. The women that were trained by this program, they formed their own group in the villages and continue to spread the voice. Politics is patriarchal and the women from the academy learned how to face these difficult men. Academy also helped in reconciliation process because there were differences from north and south of the country and the women carried the message to increase

participation from every sector to build reconciliation. It also helped that they organize meetings for people from north and south. Women were scared to get out of their houses and people come there and talk to them in their houses and it helped to take away the fear that they had. They were able to take out the nationalistic idea from the head of the people.”

- “The women barrier that we experience in politics comes from society. In home, they cannot express political idea. Societies think that women are bad, are evil so that’s way they cannot participate in politics. Men traditionally say that they have to stay on house; this is male dominion. Because of those societal barriers, family level, they feel like to giving up but looking other persons that could have a role and a leadership is very important because it gives them strengths. This program is about this because they could have experienced and saw women that could fight these barriers and have a role in politics and this encourage them.”

### *Sustainability issues*

Although the project is still underway, IMADR is very clear where the sustainability of the project resides. It is not a matter of funding, but in process of empowerment given to the beneficiaries. The project is a means for a longer-term strategy that did not initiate with the CSO and will not end with the CSO. This thinking is expressed clearly in the voice of the CSO who suggest that the leader of the CSO in question is: “is famous as an institutional developer and the women political academy will continue. We have more than 200 active members in the academy in different locations in the country and they continue to work and will cope with the academy. The project will stop but the process will continue and other fundraising will be done to continue having funds to organize activities. The experiences that people got are always brought back at the grassroots level. The sustainability is very clear in that.”

In the view of the grantee, sustainability “has nothing to do with having more resources. Personally it is my commitment and I am in politics, so whatever happens next year, I will continue to work on this. Sustainability is assured in an unorganized manner because it is within the women and they will continue too to have a political participation. The women political academy is the formal thing that this project will leave us with representation of different level (national and grassroots) and we are thinking not on a NGO logic to have and spend money but to give him a more contents-based status. The real sustainability is that these women have lost the fear of participate. They will receive a certificate for other purposes, but really the sustainability is in them. For the institute, we are talking with universities and something already happened in Kandy where one of our modules is offered by the university. I want to end UNDEF phase with this kind of idea. Next phase can be expanding the process or negotiate with local government to include the CV in their education system or in the local government institute.”

### *Reflections/recommendations*

This project is a great example of a category of projects that are built around the activism and political participation of one person. As such, the project is in practice a support for the role and view of the person, who leads other people in a pathway, and provides a model for society. The project is also inserted into a longer process, and is able to achieve some specific

results in a major strategy. In this sense, it could be ‘action oriented’, but really it is a ‘process oriented’ intervention.

An analysis of the perceptions of beneficiaries indicates that the project will achieve much more than what was intended. This raises a question for UNDEF concerning the validity of funding individuals, and where it is possible to establish valid criterion for selecting such individuals and the projects they support. While international cooperation bases its interventions on institutional strengthening, it is clear that people ultimately form these institutions and people characterize the work that the public and private institutions do. There is a fine line between what UNDEF thinks it is funding and what it is really funding, which, in this case and others, is clearly a person. The history of the person involved, and what he/she has demonstrated to date are sufficient elements for taking a decision and the results can be astonishing, as in this instance.

To finalize, the CSO expressed the need to share experiences and learn from others – as expressed by almost all the CSOs involved in this evaluation. According to the beneficiaries spaces of interaction and the possibility to share and learn from others, are worthy enough to justify such efforts. This particular evaluation ends with a quote from the leader of the CSO concerning democracy:

“If UNDEF is about democracy, this kind of project should be funded for more time. UNDEF is looking at this as a process or only as a one-shoot funding? Once we loose touch, we will lose touch with them. They don’t bring us together, share experiences? Also it is important to express solidarity. Would they bring us together? Could they support some kind of global lobbying? I would urge UNDEF to keep some synergy. It is a pity if they only are limited to the project.”

### **11. Case Study Eleven: Paint a Rainbow – Youth Voices for Democracy in Sri Lanka (UDF-11-459-SRL)**

*Overview: The Shilpa Sayura Foundation promoting critical thinking and youth participation through Internet*

This project is one of the most innovative projects analysed during the evaluation. The CSO is not a ‘traditional CSO,’ and, much like the last example, it depends on the efforts of a person, from the private sector. The Foundation was started with the desire to offer youth a practical way to enter in the ‘internet developer world’, offering training and spaces of interaction within them and among other successful businessman that are recognized in the internet entourage.

The project is the result of an analysis conducted by the Foundation that demonstrated that a repressive government was limiting social participation and youth could not find a way to express their will to participate. The project tried to find a channel through the Internet where youth could be trained and begin to interact with one another. This led to the elaboration of the project: “how to contribute to ameliorate the public sector policies in the country”, while encouraging people to share their opinions of the situation in the country.

The result is the so-called ‘facebook revolution’, where more than “1,200 youth has been trained with democracy awareness and digital media skills, equipped and engaged them

to express their voices becoming voice of the voiceless through social media. Their content initiated a democratic dialog to influence civil society in Sri Lanka at Presidential Election 2015.<sup>6</sup>”

#### *UNDEF collaboration with Shilpa Sayura Foundation*

As previously mentioned, the main contributors of the Foundation are business-based companies and UNDEF is more an exception than the rule in terms of donors. The way by which the CSO express the relation with UNDEF is quite concrete and direct. “We have ideas, which we presented to UNDEF and they provided funds and guidance for implementing the project. It is a good relation.”

Normally business and cooperation have two different languages when designing projects but in this case, the distance was overcome by the clarity of the formats used by UNDEF, and the common understanding of what is implied in terms of Result Based Management. One grantee representative elaborated: “They are very organized and they have very focused guidelines and they are result oriented. I learnt to design projects in their format which is designed for goal oriented projects and it is measurable in sense of analyzing progress in respect to results.”

In this sense, the guidance process contributed to a learning process, which was appreciated and helped the implementation of the process and has been adopted by the foundation in further projects. The grantee continued: “We are using the budgeting model and the framework for results, where we put objectives, activities and goals. And they are all linked so it is easier to evaluate the project. They simplified my project idea into achievable goals. I use the financial framework because it is very useful. We also use the democracy module that was designed in the project by us because it is very useful for the curricula of the school. Indirectly it is going also to the governmental sector now.”

The presence of UNDEF was a guarantee for the CSO, as the political context had forced a number of persons to abandon the country because of their involvement in CSOs. As the grantee stated: “The main thing is that we could not speak openly about the democracy fund because in that period it was dangerous to use the term. So, we said that the project was from United Nations and not UNDEF specifically. We maintained a low visibility because of the political situation in the country. We did not explain what UNDEF means, we only mentioned that it was the United Nations because it gave us strength.”

#### *Sustainability issues*

According to the grantee, the network fostered by the project is still active and represents a space that is used by youth to share thoughts, ideas and to channel social thinking. In this sense, there is continuity to the project and it seems to have taken its own direction, assuring a means of participation, which can be considered promising and innovative as a way to channel needs and monitor the work of the State. As elaborated by the grantee:

*“The network that was built is a social network. It continues pressuring the government for a reform. We started work on gender equality in the net and also in ethnical harmony (anti racism). We also work on education reform and youth rights.*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/stocktaking/projects/Project/Details?projectId=1423163769>

*We created a habit and a behavior and it continues with media that can influence public opinion. After the election, the new government prohibited using helmets in motorcycle, but the people fought and the law was changed. It is like that the government is afraid of the social network so they respond and quickly. As the previous government has fallen because of social media, they know that social media can change things. Social network created a very important impact on changing the mentality of young people that were in social network and could use that to understand what was happening. Social network started the wave to change the mentality of not talking for being afraid. And also, they become informed, it was a good way to have information and a lot of corruption made by the Government was revealed in the social networks. Also the government started to use social network but people were spreading their opinions and it could not affect what people think.”*

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

During the visit it was not possible to interview the beneficiaries of the project that could validate and transmit their perceptions on the project. Nevertheless, the evaluator talked to other people in-country, not related to the project that confirmed the outputs and outcomes of the initiative. The project has also not been evaluated and it would be important to do so in order to analyse it deeply, especially an assessment of the factors that contributed to the results obtained.

The impact of the project is astonishing and provides lessons concerning the shift in the governments approach, towards a more democratic approach. The project appears to be ground-breaking, and contribute to starting a process of democratization of the country. In this sense, although there is not acceptable scientific evidence on the impact of this particular project, the qualitative analysis establishes this correlation, and should be explored further. The project suggests that from a small action we can obtain remarkable outcomes, with a broad range of consequences that surpass the outputs and outcomes proposed and demonstrate that taking risks with new forms of interventions can prove beneficial.

UNDEF should reflect on this: the Fund has a comparative advantage with respect to other donors, which puts it in a better position to experiment and find new way to foster democracy. As much as some guarantee are needed to Fund CSOs all over the world, it is important not to be exclusively guided by such guarantees, and to try something new, something different that can represent a invaluable learning, regardless of whether the results are positive or negative.

## **IV. Europe**

### **12. Case Study Twelve: Civil Society to Monitor and Contribute to Transparency and Anti-Corruption Policies in Moldova (UDF-11-469-MOL)**

*Overview: The East Europe Foundation in coordination with the anti-corruption alliance fostering fight against corruption by playing a watchdog role and contributing to anti-corruption policies.*

The East Europe Foundation (EEF) was founded in Moldova in 2009 as a national foundation, continuing the effort initiated in 1994 by the Eurasia Foundation, an American organization, which operated in former Soviet Union until 2013. EEF is a foundation that

invests in small CSOs in order to strengthen them by financing small grants to foster their role in good governance process. It focuses, inter alia, on the fight against corruption as a consequence of the fact that “corruption is a problem in Moldova” and “all international organizations point out that the major problem is corruption in the country”, as highlighted by representatives from the CSO.

In the case of the UNDEF’s project, the EEF played a direct operational role, especially due to the fact the fight against corruption is a long process that needs to have a strong political support by different actors EEF assumed this role due to its recognition in the international community as a serious and professional organization. The project is part of a broader and longer strategy, which started in 2005 and which was formalised by the establishment of the ‘Anticorruption Alliance of NGOs’, whose goal is to foster and monitor Government efforts in the fight against corruption.

As such, the project was designed as a part of this process, with the aim of revitalizing the alliance by generating an effective network of CSOs engaged in the anti-corruption fight, promoting coordination among them in the monitoring of the implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy, fostering the participation of local CSOs and media in the fight against corruption and generate a space of interaction among the public sector and CSOs. The outputs of the project included production of three monitoring reports, analysing the effort of the State in fighting corruption and providing recommendation and advise in order to foster the public effort.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with EEF*

The collaboration between the two organizations was beneficial since the beginning and there is a high level of appreciation of the support provided by UNDEF during all phases of the project. The grantee highlighted: “From my perspective, it was easy to communicate and to report to UNDEF. We asked to make changes in activities, it was easy to get approval so we had good quality and cooperation. Even from the beginning there was a great cooperation. It was quite easy. We received answers to our questions, we communicated with UNDEF in the milestone events, and they delegated to UNDP representative and they came and wrote some reports after the event. It was very fruitful and easy.” The guidance process also was helpful for designing the project as “at the end we had a very clear and measurable project with clear outputs and outcomes. There was a pressure to have very specific outputs and outcomes in the project and so it was very easy to report...It was very useful, if you look back, even if this process was quite long, the implementation was easier because of this effort.”

The Foundation and its personnel have a long experience in funding and implementing projects and, according to their perceptions, working with UNDEF – while it did not teach them any particular skills or methods, did contribute to their process of growing and become more professional. Nevertheless, one aspect that was pointed out refers to the possibility to learn from other CSOs experiences and the potential role that UNDEF could play in fostering this process. The grantee highlighted that by looking at what others have done in other countries you can “have more ideas, more solutions. Maybe we are struggling with problems that other organizations resolved years ago.”

UNDEF’s comparative advantages were highlighted by the grantee: “when working with the public sector they give credibility to our monitoring process on how the public

institutions were implementing their anti-corruption policies.” To understand the results of the project, it is important to highlight that it represents one of the steps toward which the fight against corruption is channelling its effort, which is a long-term goal that started before the project and will continue long after its end. The grantee summarised some of the key results:

- “More than half of the recommendations (of the monitoring reports) were taken into consideration by the state authority. Another one result is the continued existence of the anticorruption alliance and they continue to work”.
- “It is quite difficult to say that we can have very big impact on fighting corruption, but civil society participation is crucial because we are broadening the people involved in fighting corruption. If you have more and more people and organization it will have an impact at individual level.
- “It was a good exercise of interaction, which paved the way to next steps for the alliance strategy. When you put together the organization it is easier to build synergies among them as it becomes also a transversal way of communication, a parallel channel that is opened within the activity.”

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The project had an important effect on the Anti-Corruption Alliance as “for the first time, organizations from civil society came together and learned how to work as a team.” Those effects also show the importance of building these spaces of communication, and a mechanism of coordination, which also help to know each other and learn from other experiences. “We all benefitted directly and indirectly from the fund”, one of the beneficiaries said. “The fund is a way to promote some values and alternative support and by this it gives you the freedom to say the truth. I have learned a lot of things about corruption and to fight it. The fund was a big opportunity for us.”

This project empowered the individuals and CSOs that participate in the alliance and as a consequence to have a more active and fearless role within the governance process. In the words of the beneficiaries:

- “We monitor the activity of the public sector from each institution from its point of view, and certain complaints came directly from the people who are afraid to face public institutions so they came to us and we provide technical skills.”
- “We had complaints every day, asking for opinions, expertise and we were not afraid to come out with a public letter and position.”

Some important outcomes have been achieved, especially in terms of the change of attitude by the public sector and the population. The project provided the opportunity to continue actions undertaken by the alliance that, although it will require more time to achieve its goals, it seems to be a healthy effort that will enrich the governance process within public and private sector. As the grantee outlined: “the percentage of people willing to give bribes has decreased to 15%. And some institutions that were seen as more corrupted have a different perception today...furthermore, 15% trust police and 18% trust the anticorruption center. In comparison with other judiciary institutions they are in a better position because the majority of institutions in the legal system has only 2% trust rating. This report shows that things have changed.”

The process is not exempt from constraints, and due to the advancement in the fight against corruption, some journalists have started to receive threats and menaces, which is worrying the Alliance and EEF. In this sense, they are trying to build a strategy to face this problem and would benefit from the experience of other CSOs that faced similar problems. The grantee underscored that, “corruption is a global issue and we can benefit from other experiences and enhance our international cooperation; we could have cross-country projects and we have now technology to keep in touch without excessive costs. This project was a starting point; it helped us to extend. We have a tradition that no one does anything but when someone starts, then everybody follows.”

### *Sustainability issues*

As this process was initiated before UNDEF’s project and is considered a long-term effort, it is still continuing at the end of the project. The EEF is constantly seeking other donors to invest in the process and, at the moment of the present evaluation, some activities were supported by bi-lateral cooperation from other countries. Nevertheless, as seen in other experiences, the lack of funding is always something that can harm these processes and lead to the understanding that similar processes should be patronized with more funding and timing. As diverse beneficiaries underscored: “If there was more funding, they could have covered bigger area and sectors of activities. So we could have done more efficient monitoring of the public authorities.”

In the alliance there is also awareness of the role CSOs play, not only in the fight against corruption, but also in fostering democratic processes throughout the country. “The ugly things happen in obscure spaces and civil society can force them to be more transparent. So CSOs put pressure on MPs (politicians), and the other end is that we come from the people. We are the connection between the people and politicians and we ring the bell when something is happening.”

This awareness gives hope that the efforts initiated can become sustainable, as there is a clear perception on the role that CSOs could play in the country and this is an indicator that there will be efforts to continue what has been started. Awareness is often accompanied by responsibility and although no guarantee exists, it surely is one of the more important components of sustainability.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

One of the aspects highlighted during the visit to the project is the possibility to learn from other CSOs experiences around the world. This should be given priority at UNDEF, not least since the majority of grantees are requesting such assistance and learning mechanisms. Furthermore, the fund can learn from its grantees and not only the fund: other States and CSOs can learn too, especially around the theme of democracy, which has so many different meanings.

This case study concludes by mentioning the definition of democracy given during the interviews with beneficiaries of the project. Although it is not a comprehensive definition, it offers an interesting point of view, highlighting the wide-ranging interpretations that are not in competition with each other, but contribute to the richness of one of the major achievements of this historical period, and by which countries are often identified and defined:

*“Democracy is the space where the freedom of one person ends and the freedom of another begins. And where every member of society is responsible for what he is doing. And we understand that we have to change the mentality of people and cultivate their interest for the city and the space they are living in. Our people are hard working, they have a good basis and this is a good starting point.”*

### **13. Case Study Thirteen: Transparency and accountability through joint media-civil society watchdog activities in Moldova (UDF-10-397-MOL)**

*Overview: Media and NGOs collaboration to fight impunity and improve transparency and accountability in the country.*

CONTACT Centre is a CSO which implements and funds projects through other CSOs in Moldova. After working for many years with the public sector on good governance projects, both at central and local levels, they realize that the capacities of CSOs to engage with the public sector were limited and fail to contribute to a more transparent public administration. Furthermore, local media were not active, and remain unclear on their potential role in fostering good governance process and promote transparency.

The idea of promoting an alliance between the two sectors – CSOs and Media – was also the result of analysis that demonstrated that they were isolated from one another, and that they could benefit from each other work, as long as they were willing to collaborate. The project was designed and CONTACT Centre started to look for potential donors. As they knew from other organizations that UNDEF has funded some projects in the country, they presented their project in the call of UNDEF and it was finally accepted by the fund.

The project was began with collaboration within media and CSOs, which proved difficult at the beginning because of prejudices and the lack of knowledge among each other. These limitations were overcome by the awareness that both actors were looking to achieve the same goal, and they recognize the other as a valid interlocutor, although their forms of working were different. The grantee suggested that it was “at that moment that we understood why it was difficult for them to work together, because it is a cultural and personal matter, where you have two different rhythms as individual and as groups. When they are in the same direction because the goal is the same, they can work together.”

The project helped to uncover different ‘scandals’ at local level that could have implications at central level, by raising awareness in the population, and obliging the State to give answers to the problems highlighted by the work of the two sectors. New policies and concrete actions were then implemented, contributing to a more transparent management of public affairs, as well as encouraging other CSOs and population to have a more active role within society.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with CONTACT Centre*

Since the beginning a clear and rapid communication was established between the two organizations, which helped to overcome misunderstanding and resolve them in a quickly manner. As the grantee highlighted: “I received answers within 3 days. Other donors can take more than 3 months and especially if it is in another country. And the answers were very

clear and also if it could be a difficult question, it would be very clear and so it makes a better communication.”

CONTACT Centre believes that donors generally have many staff and, from their interactions with UNDEF were sure that they must have 10 to 15 people working at central level, leading them to be much more efficient and responsive than other donors they have worked with. CONTACT Centre learned to be more efficient in its own communications with its own grantees, but more over, they learned something in how to work with beneficiaries. As one CSO representative mentioned:

*“When we received the funds from UNDEF, we were working also with other donors and it was the opposite because we received pressures everyday and every hour from them. If we compare with other donors, UNDEF would be in first place. I worked for 15 years and we financed a lot of projects. I always discuss with donors: if you give money for your beneficiaries, after negotiation, you are not only giving the money but also responsibility. You just define M&E but not pressure because it becomes terrible as donors and as implementers. As donors you are responsible to monitor but not everyday. The same as EU delegation but you cannot communicate with them. On the contrary with UNDEF you have: 1) Money and responsibility and, 2) the ‘I am ready to help you, if you need help’ rule.”*

The application and guidance process was also appreciated. The first helped them to concentrate their idea in a limited space, so they could have a clearer idea of what they wanted to do. The second helped them because it allowed them to revise the entire project and make it more tangible and clear in its objective, products and results, making clear what they had to do. The grantee elaborated: “If we compare UNDEF to other donors, it is something new because many donors don’t use this guidance process. Many donors will accept the project at the beginning without the process. Many donors (prefer to) negotiate only the budget”

CONTACT Centre not only learned from its relationship with UNDEF, but some of these learnings have been incorporated in their work and replicated in its activities. The grantee underscored that they have now “learned how to revise projects proposals and understand better how to structure our ideas. We use it also as donors in another similar projects that have been funded by EU. We had a call of proposals and we use the same negotiation that UNDEF used with us. We also adopted the fact that we don’t negotiate the amount of the proposals and don’t pressure on the implementation and part of this we learned from UNDEF.”

CONTACT Centre also thinks that UNDEF can help other CSOs to learn how to deal with project design and implementing, and with fostering reciprocal knowledge and communication with CSOs in different countries, as the experience of one can be beneficial to others. As highlighted by many grantees during the evaluation: “Grassroots organizations could benefit by increasing their capacities in working projects proposals. In terms of writing projects, implementing and also fundraising. Also, by knowing other similar organizations and experiences in other countries. There is a good organization in Moldova that works with people with disabilities and that cannot design projects. They could learn from others experiences, so they can develop their own project...A lot of civil society organizations do not have the capability to change the system and that’s why they have still to learn. If other CSOs have experience on how to engage with that, it could be useful for Moldova to know.”

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The impact of these activities in the country is evident. It was not only the fact that different actors learned to work with each other, but also that they could make a contribution to improve the life of the population in tangible ways. More specifically, some outputs are important to mention:

a) The dismantling of a “ghost company” that was administrating food and vaccination for cows and was used as a money laundering system, which resulted in the dismissal of the head of the national food agency and the change of the national policy in relation with food and vaccination, complying with the European Union standards;

b) The denouncement of the existence of chemical deposits in different parts of the country, which resulted in their removal and a major awareness from the State and the population on environmental issues;

c) The denouncement that public schools were asking for money for improvements in the school to parents, insisting there would be repercussions if they did not pay and use that money for increasing their salaries, which become a national scandal that drove the attention of the Minister of Education, and stopped this practice.

Other scandals were also highlighted during the interviews, such appropriation of public goods by individuals and misuse of money and goods by local municipalities. The outcomes of such initiatives can be considered to be the major contribution to the improvement of public services, and the life of the population. In the case of the cows control and care, when the new policy came into action – as one beneficiary noted - “it affected positively all the animals and their owners because they were better protected against diseases; also it changed the way veterinarians were selected; before it was for political reasons and now it is for capacity. We were able to stop a corrupt system and build highly quality services”.

This resulted in a major benefit for all the population in general as “the cows are more controlled and no diseases has spread among them. There were no animal diseases in the region as a consequence, and in market the prices and quality of meat has increased. We did something good for the communities.” Something similar happened with the contribution asked from parents in the school; after the case become public, the government intervened and looked for a solution, which lead to a more transparent and participatory process, and channel the parent’s contribution to real improvements in the education system. The beneficiary noted:

*“The important achievement was that we could get parents together and we put them in contact with legal expert to help them dealing with this issue. And we explained to them that they needed to be registered and have an account and with this they have the right to apply and receive directly the funds for maintenance. More than half of schools today have these parents associations and many of them participate in different projects. Many parents were willing to participate but did not have any information, so we provided the information and they could start to participate.”*

In the case of the chemicals deposit, apart from the fact that the chemicals could be removed, an important outcome is the increasing awareness of the population on environmental issues, which positively affected not only Moldavian population but also has some repercussions in other countries. “While conducting the investigation and collecting

information, people become aware and started talking about it, so they raised awareness and started to get involved. This happened in other regions, too, like Ukraine because the chemicals were infecting water from river too. All these efforts lead to the declaration of the ministry of defense that they had to remove these chemicals.”

In terms of the relationships between the media and CSOs, much progress was made; as a key beneficiary outlined:

“The best thing it was that before the project there was not a good relationship between mass media and NGOs. And when we met the first time we were seated on different sides of the table. There was the opinion that NGOs had a lot of money and mass media did not reveal this information, they washed their hands. When we started working together, we still did not have a good relationship, but when the project ended we understood that we could have a stronger force if we worked together. NGOs have their mechanism and they have more people, and very good to contact with people. Mass media can be used as a platform to describe their activities and what people think. And even after the end of the project we continue to have cooperation with other NGOs.”

### *Sustainability issues*

The majority of the beneficiaries lamented the fact that the project had insufficient funds and a short timeframe that affected the range and number of topics investigated. In this sense, they suggested that longer projects could be more beneficial to this kind of activities. The grantee underscored that they “could have done much more if the budget was bigger and we could have covered a larger area. We could have organized more events and confronted other problems.”

In the opinion of the evaluator, the project was sustainable to a certain degree because of the social and institutional awareness that the project contributed to. In this sense, the relationships built among NGOs and media and the awareness of the population are two of the major successes of the project, and this will continue. It would be beneficial, however, if UNDEF could be part of this effort because of its neutrality, with respect to other donors, and the level of results and outcomes obtained, as well as the strategic level of incidence.

Furthermore, it would be important for UNDEF to maintain contact with the CSO in order to gather information on the ultimate outcomes derived from the project, as it seems important for the fund to know what its medium and long-term contributions are, and for other CSOs to be able to learn from the experience.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

This is an innovative project made possible by UNDEF since other donors were not interested in supporting this project. Analysing the results of the project, the evaluator concludes that, although innovative projects can be risky, they could be a preferred area of investment for UNDEF since their results are exceptional for the country. UNDEF is different to other donors, according to the grantees. UNDEF gives trust and responsibility to the CSO, UNDEF is not continuously asking for things from CSOs during the implementation period, and UNDEF does not have an agenda to implement; instead, it trusts the CSO agenda and UNDEF helps them to have a clearer view on what they want to achieve.

This gives UNDEF a privileged space to interact with CSOs, built on respect, trust and responsibility - that in this case is enough for assuring that they money invested is well spent, and that communications are honest. In this sense, less attention is needed when the grantee is working on its own agenda, and when the project is owned by the grantee.

#### **14. Case Study Fourteen: Promoting Democracy in Georgia through empowering young members of political parties and civil society organizations (UDF-11-467-GEO)**

*Overview: Empowering and provide a space of discussion and negotiation among youth belonging to political parties and civil society organizations.*

The International Centre for Social Research and Policy Analysis (ICSRPA) is a Georgian CSO working in the field of good governance at the political level. In their work, they come into contact with different types of organizations, such as NGOs, political parties and public institutions, and they realized that although youth was invited to participate in those institutions, there were no internal policies to train them and give them spaces to express their opinions.

The CSO became intrigued by this fact and undertook a need analysis, which highlighted that youth lack theoretical knowledge and policy analysis, advocacy and also understanding of concepts such as democracy. This is used as an ‘excuse’ for not involving them, but the analysis also demonstrated that it was a common behavior among public institutions, political parties and CSOs, used as a reason for not sharing power and maintaining a protagonist role. The needs assessment also indicated that youth that do belong to political parties and CSOs have more enthusiasm, and are more active within their structures. However, although they are doing a strong work, they don’t benefit economically and their career paths are not supported.

The strategy of the project was based in two phases: The first one consisted of giving youth political knowledge in order to give them skills, concept and methods related to democracy and good governance; the second phase consisted of jointly elaborating an action plan to be presented to both sectors and implemented. “It was like a theory and a practice training process and it could become a point of reference for them too.”

As a result of this process, ICSRPA learned to work with young people: “it was an absolute different project for us. We are used to work at political level and this was something new and also discover their reality, in terms of needs and point of view and dreams”. One of the most interesting results was that youth from different political leanings could work with each other, putting aside their differences in order to learn from each other’s point of view. Furthermore, despite the ending of the project, they are still in contact with each other and collaborate in common goals.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with ICSRPA*

The collaboration with UNDEF was strongly appreciated by ICSRPA and the ease of communication was highlighted as a comparative advantage of the Fund in respect to other donors. The grantee highlighted the guidance process as being “difficult”, but they found that it contributed to a more defined a clear project, which facilitate the implementation. As the

grantee mentioned: “Generally our experience was very positive. I would like to mention that the procedures of UNDEF are quite easy, especially in comparison with other donor’s projects, which are quite complicated and bureaucratic. Comparatively, UNDEF is heaven. Sending something to another donor for approval means waiting for months for the answer, which is frequently the reason of jeopardizing projects. In the UNDEF project, we had to change something in the budget and we received the answer in a few days. This flexibility and responsiveness facilitates the implementation of the project, and also the fact that they are open. In the other project, the implementation was paralyzed for six months because according to procedures we had to buy computers produced only in Europe and it was not possible. With UNDEF, we did not have such kind of odd obstacles, so we could concentrate more on the implementation of the project without any delays. The writing of the project was not easy at all, but running the project was easier because of the project document design and the procedures, which are quite flexible. And we were really surprised by the fact that there are so few people to successfully run such a large fund.”

Regarding the contents of the project, the grantee found that UNDEF is open to new ideas and invests in some fields where other donors don’t. This has a consequence for the way in which projects are formulated, which reflects the reality in which they want to contribute to and allow for identifying results that are less quantitative but more strategic. The guidance process is the way by which these ideas become tangible and the support provided by UNDEF was essential during the writing of the project. The grantee learnt from UNDEF: “I can say that we learned that you could be more flexible with project. We had the chance to implement our idea, which is not possible with other donors. Other donors need results that are quantitative: like 100 books, etc. They don’t think that empowering youth could be a result.”

The fact that UNDEF funded the project was important to open doors and improved the reputation of ICSRPA. It also convinced the political parties and CSOs to send their youth to participate in the project because of the neutrality of UN. “The population perceives UN as neutral. Not (like other donors). It is because UN is composed by so many countries while the others have specific national interests. Other donors are supporting specific interests, they have an agenda; UNDEF does not.”

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The project addressed a perceived need of the target population, which contributed to its success. The fact that it could design its strategy and contents based on what was expressed by the needs assessment made him relevant and encouraged participation of the beneficiaries. The project was designed in order to be a unique action, basing its sustainability in the transmission of solid knowledge, and a practice that could transform the theory into a concrete action, with better opportunities to be assimilated by the beneficiaries. As one beneficiary highlighted:

*“The training was provided and the information and knowledge was different and innovative. I was studying political science, but we never received a course like that because the method, by which it was given, was different. University is providing the knowledge but the approach is absolutely different. The motto of our training was meritocracy, which is a huge problem because we have the clientelism/paternalism style, and while we were working, we could understand what in practice means to work in a meritocracy system. Maybe it is not so important universally speaking as a*

*democratic project, but it is highly relevant to the situation of Georgia.”*

Also the strategy to put together people from different ideological backgrounds and political affiliations and NGOs was a good decision, that influenced the participants positively, and gave them a practical way to understand democracy and participate in a democratic process. “Another thing that was important,” said the grantee, “is that it was a space where they could work together despite their political beliefs, and it built a platform where they can communicate now and also in the future. They become somehow friends but they also could understand the importance of Dialogue.”

This space is one of the major achievements of the project and a promising result that could lead the experience to different outcomes and sustain the effort in the future. The project also enabled beneficiaries to get access to “useful information and we could share it with one another. It could make people active and better prepared. And it also built a community within us, which is active and will have a future.” The process is still very much alive since beneficiaries have been able to engage other people in the project, or in the practices and principles of the project. As one beneficiary stated: “The organization that I created engaged many people from the region and I shared this experience to them so it had an impact on many people in the region.”

One of the beneficiaries gave an example of the impact of the project: “Our big success is that we worked with a person that is disabled and lived closed in the house, but she is a very clear and active person, so we involved her in the group and she begun to investigate how to generate services, and now she is employed by the youth department of the Ministry of Youth. And she is now spreading nationally the existence of different problems that affect youth and push people to get a conscience on that. We think that passing information to youth should not exclude anyone, because it doesn’t matter what they will be when they grow up; they need to have a critical thinking.”

#### *Sustainability issues*

As mentioned previously, the relationships initiated between the beneficiaries seem to be the profound basis on which the sustainability of the project is based. The fact that people belonging to different ideologies and organizations could find and maintain a channel of communication based on respect, dialogue and understanding of the other’s point of view is promising in terms of spreading a different way of behaving among actors. This could have an influence in contributing to a different kind of leadership in the country. As the grantee said: “The sustainability of the project is in the network and we created a space for that does not need funds to work. This exchange of information is very helpful because we can help each other with technical issues but also we know what is happening in the country.”

ICSRPA has maintained relations with the beneficiaries after the ending of the project, not based on the implementation of a new project, but as an institutional decision to foster the process initiated and invest in this relation. The grantee indicated that beneficiaries continue to write for their advice: “ They found a channel with us because no one involved them before, and we are trying to share information with them on the political situation. We kind of started a family. It was not a project that closed and then that’s it. We have continuous contact with them and they help us also understand the reality of the country.”

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

While analyzing the ingredients for a successful project, it is necessary to identify the structural foundations on which the achievements are built. In the case of this project and in the opinion of the evaluator, the following can be highlighted:

- The project was designed based on **needs-assessment** that could identify the perceived needs of the target group and validate them with the same beneficiaries;
- The project offered an **innovative learning method** that was based on a theory and a practice, strengthening the assimilation of its contents and providing an existential experience to the participants by analyzing practical situations that affects the country nowadays;
- The project created a space that could **integrate differences** in backgrounds and foster forms of participation into a unique platform, where rules of participation were clearly based on respect and dialogue, gave space to individuals rather than institutional views. Which, at the end, is providing a practical democratic space of participation;
- The attitude of the CSO that did not **impose a way of thinking**, that was neutral politically and focused on the interpretation of the reality by fostering critical thinking.

Many of the lessons learned from this process could be adopted as a means to evaluate the proposals received by the Fund. Offering spaces of interaction, providing living and existential experiences, and bringing together different groups around the same table, are formulas that seems to work better than other more traditional ways of empowering people (through trainings programmes, for example). As such, UNDEF could base its analysis on the proposal received assuring that these conditions are met, not only in projects aimed to empower specific groups, but also in other that are focused on other issues.

### **15. Case Study Fifteen: Promoting the application of alternative, non-custodial sanctions in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (UDF-07-520-GEO)**

*Overview: Penal Reform International (PRI) is promoting the adoption of alternative, non-custodial sanctions in Armenia and Azerbaijan on the basis of the experience of Georgia.*

The main idea of the project was to reduce the use of custodial sentences, depending on the offence and if the person is not a risk for society. At the same time, it aimed to explore alternative sentences such as community services, designed to serve as a better rehabilitation process.

The project strategy consisted of promoting the theme in Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of the Georgian experience, where a probation institute is functioning, and by: fostering a process in the three countries with activities related to training probation officers; coordinating councils within private and public sectors to discuss the reform; guaranteeing presence in discussion spaces; and, having meetings within the public officers of the different countries and international visits. In terms of tangible results of the project, the following can be highlighted:

1. In Georgia the project was successful at promoting a number of varieties of sanctions to be administered by the Probation Institute and, as a result of this, increasing consistently the number of sanctions implemented with non custodial sentences;
2. In Armenia, the project was able to foster the approbation of the law for non-custodial sentences (which is now awaiting the signature of the President to enter into force) and contributed to structure the probation system in the country;
3. In Azerbaijan, although the probation law was not approved, the process has started and the output of the project is that they could integrate the discussion in relation to the probation law in the political agenda of the country.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with PRI*

The collaboration with UNDEF is considered positive and the relationship relatively good, especially due to the fact that a person from UNDEF visited the CSO during the elaboration of the project and contributed to the design of a more realistic document. The grantee highlighted that they found it “difficult to work with the logical framework and we wanted to be realistic, also about our capacity to monitor it. A good thing was that Annika came to Georgia and had a meeting with the former Director and after that we submitted the full proposal. This was in August and we presented the proposal in December, we received the approval note in May, and we started to draft and send the first project document in June. A lot of changes have been made within the different sections of the project document.”

The perceptions of the guidance process confirm the utility of the process, which is considered difficult, but it is appreciated because it contributes to design a better project, which is then easier to implement. The grantee member highlighted: “I learned how to cooperate with this new fund. I learned how to draft new proposals, new concepts and it was an input for my professional experience in order to better analyze the projects. It was difficult but interesting.”

The comparative advantage of UNDEF is also recognized in its typology of interaction with the CSOs and the perception that, unlike other donors, UNDEF cares about the projects: “The interacting process was very cooperative and they asked, commented and suggested -so the relation was very good. They had an interest in what we were doing. They also asked about the project during the implementation. The majority of donors do not do this.” The fact that UNDEF belongs to the UN system was deemed as useful by the CSO and contributed to the effectiveness of the project, “because when you mention UN it gives extra value to your work. And also because we were promoting the UN standards on the penitentiary system, so it was giving strength to our purpose.” Lastly, the constructive attitude of the CSO contributed to the establishment of a different relationship with the public sector, which added to the achievement of the desired outputs. The grantee concluded that: “We were not only a watchdog organization, we were proposing and giving alternatives so we had solutions and these were looked with interest by the government.”

#### *Sustainability issues*

Although the project has been completed, PRI will continue promoting the action on this theme. The grantee indicated that “the project is still not over, although it finished in February. The movie is still in working status and we have other projects that will continue this action. We will still promote the idea of using alternative methods in respect to

imprisonment. We guarantee our presence with other projects. We will also look for other funds based on the good results obtained within the UNDEF project.”

A regional project, however, implies elevated costs in terms of traveling, and the lack of funding will have an impact on activities. These activities are based on the interaction among different States and imply the need to look for additional funds to complete outputs and outcomes of the process.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

The project demonstrates that although a relation between the public sector and CSOs can be difficult to build, some factors can contribute to establish new types of interaction. To summarise: it is possible to highlight some lessons-learned to be analysed and eventually adopted by UNDEF when selecting projects:

1. Watchdog organizations will be more effective when constructive alternatives are proposed instead of only criticism. Projects designed with this aim are more likely to be successful;
2. Countries can learn from other countries. Activities that foster learning on similar themes from the experience of other countries can overcome the challenges of communication, interaction and trust between public sector and CSOs, especially when a CSO is promoting them;
3. The most important comparative advantage of UNDEF is its neutrality, which cannot be assured when CSOs are funded by a bilateral entity, neither in private foundations or institutions belonging to political ideology or parties. Donors should also be aware that investing through the Fund would give more opportunity to their funds to be accepted by countries.

### **16. Case study Sixteen - Participatory Rights of the Physically Disabled Persons in Georgia (UDF-09-333-GEO)**

*Overview: Qualification Centre for Trainers (QCT) promoting the rights and fostering the inclusion of people with disabilities.*

The project was designed with the aim of catalysing a complex process, which would give visibility to the situation lived by PWDs, promoting awareness and the design and implementation of public policies directed to increase the integration of the target group in the socio-economic life of Georgia. The project initially sought to enhance the public's perception on the right of PWDs. The project was able to complete the majority of its outputs and opened a new context in which further benefits can be achieved because of the ratification of the convention on the right of PWDs, which will ensure that a public policy and further actions will be implemented.

In this sense, new opportunities arose for PWDs, and public attention has increased hopefully meaning that the process will not stop with the ending of the project and can be sustainable – both socially and politically. As the grantee suggested: “The changes up to the ratification were automatic and formal, and some of the programs that started to work and whereas others were being improved upon. There is a good effect on the beneficiaries. They receive an allowance, which has been increased.”

### *UNDEF collaboration with QCT*

QCT has an overall positive perception of its relationship with UNDEF, both during the design and the implementation of the project, which is expressed in the following quotes:

- “When we started writing the project UNDEF was useful because they made continuous feedback, and the project was very sophisticated. This process took a while but it is very useful.”
- “The communication during the implementation was frequent and positive. When changes were needed, they were very open and cooperative because they wanted the project to be successful. Every time we wrote to them they replied quickly.”

But the relationship with UNDEF is also described as a not conventional ‘donors-grantees’ relationship, and is perceived as much more positive when compared to other donors. The grantee suggested that this was “the first time that the donor is in direct communication through the phone – voice-to-voice communication that was kind of nice. We received feedback personally by voice. It encouraged me to send information to UNDEF even because we were obliged to do that. It felt like a personal relation, of course formal, but still personal.”

The guidance process was also recognized as a useful tool to increase the capacity of the CSO and to assure the quality of the project design. “They were providing feedback for every draft. In the end it was successful, as we had a detailed project. I did not have an experience in writing projects so I was learning through the process ... it helped me to write more detailed projects”

### *Sustainability issues*

QCT is not active after the conclusion of the project. While the outputs have been achieved, the experiences accumulated during the implementation of the project are somehow dispersed and reorganized in other CSOs, which will assure that the learning from the interaction with UNDEF will be maintained.

On the other side, no other CSOs are taking initiative to maintain awareness on the rights of PWDs, as well as giving continuity to the process. It is hopeful that other actors could replace the role played by QCT and foster a longer process, as well as monitoring the implementation of the public action aimed to face the integration process of persons with disabilities.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

The project is a successful action-oriented intervention that contributed to the achievement of important results, and which raised public interest in a major problem neither visible to society nor prioritized by the public sector. As such, it could set the basis for addressing needs, and building further benefits to the target population and, as a result, positively affect their lives.

Since the CSO stopped operations after the project, it demonstrates the risks of not ensuring sustainability. Although, this project reached a certain numbers of outputs, this does

not mean that attention is not further needed, and much more could have been achieved if the project continued. As signalled by the evaluation, only a small percentage (11%) of the PWDs trained by the project were able to find a job as a result of the program, and now that no one is advocating for them it is likely to be even more difficult for them to be the active members of society they should be.

Nevertheless, the State of Georgia will now elaborate policies related to the right of PWDs and the CSO have become a major asset in assuring the quality and impact of interventions. Analysing the other projects visited in the field, the majority of them maintained some kind of relationship with beneficiary or with the themes they were working on. However, when the CSO disappears, this aspect of sustainability can no longer be assured. This does not imply that all CSOs should be given additional funding, but that CSOs should be strengthened as part of the UNDEF process to ensure a greater chance of living on beyond the project.

## **V. Latin America and Caribbean**

### **17. Case Study Seventeen: Civic Participation of Indigenous Youth for the Strengthening of Democracy (UDF-11-476-GUA).**

*Overview: COMADEP (Mesoamerican Cooperation for Development and Peace), as a part of CONGCOOP (Coordination of NGOs and Cooperatives) promoted the participation of Q'eqtchi youth (especially women) in individual and collective decision-making and democratic processes in the municipality of Sayaxché, department of Petén, expressly involving the local government in this process*

COMADEP is a Guatemalan NGO, which works on fostering a culture of peace in the department of Petén. Petén, which is the largest department of Guatemala, is a neglected territory where public services are scarce and incipient. During the civil war, Petén was a preferred zone for displaced population due to its distance from the rest of the country (not only physical but also in terms of means of communication), which makes the population feel more secure than in the conflict areas.

The lack of services and the fear of participation contribute to the resilience of the region, and COMADEP's goal is to foster people's participation in local governance. Youth represents more than 70% of the population in Guatemala so that it is a preferred target to reverse a process of exclusion and marginalization by empowering them and promote their participation in public affairs.

COMADEP's strategy involved a first phase, where young people, especially women were nurtured on issues related to governance, democracy and participation, then, in a second phase, they were charged with developing social policies in relation to the youth, which were then presented and negotiated with local governments. As reported in the evaluation, this strategy was built around the concepts of: (a) increasing knowledge and raising awareness; (b) identifying and sustainably utilizing spaces to influence decision-making; and (c) ensuring gender equality.

The project also designed to have a 'cascade effect' whereby 100 young people would be initially trained and, in a second phase, the same 100 would train other 20 people from their villages and surroundings. In that way, more than 2,000 youth have been trained during

the project. Furthermore, despite to the fact that a percentage of the youth involved in the project were able to find working opportunities in local governments and CSOs, the project fostered the municipality of Sayaxché in creating a policy for youth and install an “office for the youth” in the municipality on charge of dealing with the policy and institutionalize a training process in the region.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with COMADEP*

COMADEP had a “very positive experience in its relation with UNDEF. Communication was very precise, fast and specific. The format was also very important because we could develop our ideas in a precise and concrete way. Some other donors just give out the money and wait for the report, but this wasn’t the case with UNDEF. We received very clear orientations that allowed us to accomplish our goals; this was very helpful. In addition, from the beginning we felt a very conscious understanding of UNDEF about the limitations of the political context.”

They also found visit from UNDEF were key: “The field visits were a key success ... the presence of the donors gave force to the process. They went to the field without too much protocol; they seemed close to the conditions of the region and this made easier the process of getting to know each other despite the language barrier. We really appreciated the humanity we saw during their field visits. We usually have donor telling us what to do and watching over us, but they rarely have any kind of contact with beneficiaries. We felt lots of freedom during the implementation and the work we did was provable and so this generated mutual trust.”

COMADEP learned how to build a baseline during the guidance process and today is still using this tool and the formats provided by UNDEF to design projects. The grantee also found the final evaluation to be very beneficial because “it was a valuable learning mechanism and a systematization of the whole process we had been through. This last step [of UNDEF’s engagement] strengthened our efforts because it covered the planning cycle, the implementation and the evaluation”. An external view on this project cycle was something they deeply appreciated: “We could definitely trust this external view,” they said.

Recently, CONGCOOP asked COMADEP to implement a course on the structure learned from UNDEF, so the formats used and the guidance process will somehow being passed to other structures of the CONGCOOP’s network. The collaboration with UNDEF, as a UN entity, also helped the project to position itself in relation to local governments and other stakeholders, and facilitated political support for the initiative. The “UN positions organizations,” the grantee said. But when we presented the project, “we did not use the word UNDEF because no one really knows what it is, but when we say United Nations, many doors open for us”.

#### *Impact on beneficiaries*

In Guatemala, as well as in the majority of countries, youth tend to be considered “not good enough” to deal and act in social contexts and governance processes. “People argue that young people lack experience and social maturity and so they are excluded,” the grantee highlighted. The project gave special attention to a group that normally is neglected, which is aggravated by the low socio-economic status of the targeted beneficiary and the lack of services in the region of intervention.

In this sense, the project was very relevant and benefitted from special attention by the beneficiaries, channelling their enthusiasm and energy in a socially productive way. Although the contents of the trainings and the activities related were designed to enhance the knowledge on governance and democratic participation, the outcomes of the project were not limited to that, but had a broader impact in the lives of the young people involved. The following quotes, taken from the interviews, speak from themselves:

- “The truth is that I run out of words when I try to explain it. It had a huge impact on me, it opened many doors, gave me a lots of opportunities and has helped me to develop in a better way, specially within society”.
- “The greatest impact is in the values that are being spread to the youth. The training is like a specialized and in-depth education that you cannot find in any school. Very good methods of participation were used, young people were encouraged to participate and were highly motivated”.

There were also unintentional outcomes of the project. By treating youth as people, and by building a space of participation and empowering them, it was able to raise the self-esteem of the participants, and help them to overcome their fears related to participation, which was in part due to the marginalization suffered by the indigenous population in the country, in part to the inheritance of the war (which violently punished whatever form of participation) but also, in part, for personal reasons, as a consequence of the above and/or to their adolescence. As one youth representative said: “I didn’t have the courage of speaking to an audience before. We have overcome this fear and now encourage other young people to do the same”. Another continued:

*“The project had an impact. After graduation, I tried to participate in other organizations but I’ve always had trouble with speaking in public. The project gave me the opportunity to work as a facilitator and overcome my fear. Now I can participate, have an opinion and give ideas. There is a tendency to believe that since we live in the rural areas and we are women, it is impossible for us to participate. The project allowed us to change this paradigm. I want other women to have this opportunity because although many of us manage to succeed, many fail behind. I have accomplished a lot as a woman but it is thanks to the support given by these organizations. They opened the door for me and allowed me to overcome my obstacles and since then I started to participate more in this kind of spaces”.*

Although it is not possible to foresee whether these impacts will lead to further changes in governance, there is a high-level of motivation amongst the beneficiaries and some promising process has started. One grantee insisted: “(The project) creates a new leadership in the communities. When you have leadership you manage to overcome obstacles. We give our opinion and present the needs of the community so that everyone gets some benefit”.

### *Sustainability issues*

COMADEP depends on donors to implement its strategies, and cannot always rely upon available funds necessarily leading to a larger process than the one determined by the funds they receive by donors. Nevertheless, they are still offering some limited kind of

support to the process initiated by maintaining contact with the beneficiaries and visiting the region to advise on specific issues or support negotiations with local governments.

The Department for Youth in the Municipality of Sayaxché gave some degree of continuity to the project, by engaging with youth and providing them with trainings and information about governance and democracy. However, the project will require additional support to continue the work already started. That said, 100 promoters directly trained by the project founded “la Asociación de los Promotores de la Democracia y la Paz” (Association of Promoters for the Democracy and the Peace), and the 2,000 youth trained by the promoters also founded “la asociación de Jóvenes del Municipio de Sayaxché” (Association of youth of the Municipality of Sayaxché), which were both active when the evaluator visited. These organizations had also been formally legalized, and were able to collaborate with the Department for Youth, and to conduct activities to promote the concept of democracy and train other youth in the region.

COMADEP is also trying to identify other donors and present other projects to continue the effort, but these efforts are yet to bear fruit. This is partly due to the fact that Guatemala is a middle income country, which means that the amount of international cooperation is decreasing. Nevertheless, the knowledge and skills acquired thanks to the project have not disappeared, and the communities of interest that were born thanks to the interaction between beneficiaries are still active, and demonstrate a promising future.

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

It is important to highlight that this typology of projects, based on generating skills, knowledge and concrete experiences to beneficiaries, has an important impact on many aspects of the beneficiaries lives. These impacts allow them raise their self-esteem, foster relations among them and change the way they interact through society.

While there is no scientific evidence to prove this, as a result of direct contact with beneficiaries the causal relationship between these aspects of the project and the effects it had on them are evident. Although the philosophy of UNDEF appears to be project-oriented, a two-year project focused on empowering people generates an enormous risk of disrupting the processes it is supporting, since these are long-term interventions that will need a longer time to acquire some kind of sustainability. In this sense, the fund has the responsibility to generate the necessary conditions for achieving sustainability by:

- A) Providing funds for longer projects;
- B) Build a mechanism where successful projects can be presented to other donors to continue the effort;
- C) Give special attention to sustainability strategy during the guidance process.

In this case, one of the outcomes of the project is that the municipality of Sayaxché assumed part of the responsibility of the project by installing an office for youth in the municipality. Supporting and fostering this office could be a way to maintain the services provided by the project.

#### **18. Case Study eighteen: Access to Justice for the Maya Q'eqchi' in Guatemala by Rebuilding Traditional Forms of Organization (UDF-12-528-GUA)**

*Overview: AEPDI promoting Access to justice for indigenous population Maya Q'eqchi through the revalorization of traditional form of justice and recovery of ancestral indigenous social organization.*

AEPDI - Defensoría Q'eqchi` (Asociación Estoreña Para el Desarrollo Integral) is a local CSO situated in the municipality of El Estor, in the southeast region of Guatemala. The CSO has been active since 2000, and it works in favour of the surrounding communities of the municipality, which has been highly appreciated and recognized. The aim of the project is divided in two major components as follows: a) legalization of indigenous communities in the region and b) interaction within the public justice system and traditional forms of conflict management.

During the life of the project, 170 communities have been registered and different efforts have been formalized in the context of the justice system. The outcomes of the project have been strategic and substantive in the following way:

1. The recognition and legalization of indigenous communities in the region meant that the public sector is obliged to include them in the management of the territory, which means they become the subject of rights, and must be consulted in terms of decisions affecting the use of natural resources, planning of infrastructure and other decisions concerning the area.
2. A collaboration between the public justice system and the traditional forms of justice has been achieved, which, on the one side, is reducing the pressure on the justice system by acquiring conflict resolution mechanisms through the traditional system, and formalizing them in the public system; and, on the other side, offering a more accepted and sustainable, culturally- and societally-accepted, form of resolving conflicts.
3. As a result of the collaboration with UNDEF, which produced programs and radio spots, a demand emerged from the communities and a community radio was established, called Community Radio Xyaab' Tzuul Taq'a.

#### *UNDEF collaboration with AEPDI*

AEPDI has been implementing the present process prior to contact with UNDEF, as a part of its own strategy on how to empower local communities in the region and strengthen interrelation among the traditional and 'modern' forms of governance. At the time of applying to UNDEF fund, they had finished a project funded by the Dutch government and "ran out of budget". As such, the collaboration with UNDEF was beneficial to AEPDI, both in terms of the timing and in terms of the assistance provided in order to design the project. A visit to the CSO from UNDEF was implemented during the design phase, which was highly appreciated by AEPDI as "this kind of behaviour isn't common among donors, and it was an honour for us to have her here. We were also able to express what our project was about and what we thought we could gain out from it; it was very good for us. Other donors just ask to send them the final report and that's it".

UNDEF is seen, as "an organization that understands" the CSO's need to make the indigenous communities of Polochic visible and support from UNDEF gave them the capacities to further these ends. For example, the web page that came as a result of the project is a virtual centre for reports and complaints. "UNDEF", they said, "strengthened us institutionally." The strengthening process that resulted as an outcome of the UNDEF

guidance phase is also highlighted as having been very positive for the organization. “They have a very good methodology to design and monitor the project. They helped us because the goals they set become a roadmap for us. They push us to find results and a structure... We learned that we have the ability to work under pressure. We received a lot of pressure regarding the milestones and the deadlines for content and administrative issues”.

Practical skills have been acquired, too, by the CSO as a result of its interaction with UNDEF, and these skills have been incorporated in AEPDI work. “We keep on using the SMART methodology for the projects. They also contributed in improving our administrative practices ... other donors asked for the SMART methodology and we were familiar with it thanks to UNDEF”. Finally, the support from a UN organization is also helped the CSO to do a better job and, in this case, to reduce the risks associated to their work. “In the context in which we live we have lots of enemies; big and small enemies: narcos (Drug traffickers), mining companies, land owners, some municipalities and others. They have tried to attack us and limit our access to funds. When UNDEF is beside us we have a...political protection that guards us. It is like a political umbrella”.

The CSO also highlighted areas of improvement for the work of UNDEF, which are mainly related to their presence during the implementation; “we are still missing some follow-up of the project, actions that are left in the air”, they said. Furthermore, the Organization found it difficult to work in English and would have preferred to have the option of working in Spanish.

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

The project was relevant for the region and led to a broad number of outcomes as a result of two important outputs. The first one relates to the recognition of indigenous communities by the public system, which, before the project, contributed to the fact that “the Q’eqchi’ have suffered discrimination and no recognition of their structures”. The project consequently formalized the indigenous communities in the framework established by the public sector. This output opened doors to the governance processes that were not previously fostered by the state: “It had an impact when the State itself started recognizing the indigenous people as part of the society...indigenous communities started to exist for the State.” Currently the Councils of Indigenous Communities Mayan Q'eqchi 'of the six municipalities are actively participating and contributing to the reform of the justice sector that is being promoted by the judicial, legislative and executive powers of the Guatemala State in order to make changes to Article 203 of the Constitution and recognizes the traditional forms of justice of the indigenous people.

The second output was the result of the training process designed to train “380 Justice Promoters”, which built a space of interaction between the traditional and the public justice system. As such, it gave the opportunity to the two systems to work together, and to know and accept each other’s working methods. This led to collaboration within the two systems where conflicts or disputes that can be resolved in the communities are then formalized in the legal system and, when this is not possible, they are derived to the public system. “It helps to reduce the gap between the State’s Law and Indigenous law.” The project also included the practical training of 380 promoters of Justice who are mediating cases in communities and are those who are now active in identifying human rights and indigenous rights violations by extractive companies and extensive plantations of oil, banana and rubber. Many beneficiaries believe the project had an important impact:

- “I believe it had an impact because indigenous rights are recognized constitutionally. However, it’s a process that is under construction and as it is stated, we have the obligation to support it and respect it. When they deal with their own issues I am not going to demand they come here; I trust their judgement. Respect exists both ways; the State’s judgement and the indigenous one”.
- “I don’t see this in black of white; nor one right or the other. It would be contradictory not to be able to find spaces of convergence, because there wouldn’t be social peace in this sense. We need to negotiate case by case; differences can also be spotted. ... There is a higher sense of connection than differences within both “types” of right”.
- “I have been able to understand what their (indigenous population) vision is and how to try to solve problems before they come here to the Court. Sometimes the presence of the court is necessary, but sometimes they solve things themselves and this allows an easier flow for the system”.

The project has facilitated, over and above the achievement of its goals, a more profound outcome, which can be expressed as recognition of the other as a valid interlocutor. Both by legalizing indigenous communities and fostering the collaboration between the two judicial systems, the project allowed an increasing awareness on the existence and validity of different forms of organization, which while recognized formally, did not have a consequence in the governance practice.

The integration of both systems still requires much more work. Nevertheless, this is a very important first step, which can be considered ground-breaking for the country and can become a point of reference. As the grantee stated: “We just started, there are communities that have been struggling for 35-40 years to have their land recognized. Authorities have been reluctant in opening participation spaces but with this project we have achieved spaces of recognition. Historically, we’ve had problems with companies (mining and monoculture) but now they seek council (created by this project) to solve these problems. It is a space to find development”.

#### *Sustainability issues*

The project continues its operations with funds from Sweden, so part of its previous activities have been included in the new project and contact with beneficiaries continues. There is, however, a more profound form of sustainability, which is the result of the empowerment at individual a community level, which can be summarized in the below quote from a CSO member: “The effect this project had was that the community gained confidence thanks to the councils of the indigenous communities that are now formalized and articulated thanks to the project. The project put in practice a law that generates a space for participation, and a negotiation possibility between the public sector and the society.”

However, to date that project has positively affected only a small portion of the communities that suffer from similar discrimination in the country. The project is a first step towards the inclusion of indigenous population in the State horizon and could become a point of reference to be replicated in other region of the country.

#### *Reflections/recommendations*

The project began process to put in practice laws that were only established formally and which were barely implemented in-country. By doing so, it opened a real and structural opportunity for the country to have tangible points of collaboration within the State, and the Indigenous populations, which count for more than half of the population of Guatemala. The lack of space for participation is considered to be one of the many reasons that ignited internal conflict in Guatemala. The project showed that dialogue and spaces of coordination can be a path to increase respect and collaboration among ethnic and social groups, and this effort is based on practices that can overcome the limits of participation imposed by the history of discrimination of the country.

**19. Case study Nineteen and Twenty: Strengthening Democracy through Freedom of Expression and Peace Agenda for Journalists in Colombia and Monitoring freedom of expression and democracy in Colombia (UDF-13-579-COL and UDF-09-341-COL)**

*Overview: FLIP promoting the freedom of information in the country at national and local level by monitoring violation of this right at both levels*

FLIP is a National Foundation promoting the freedom of expression in Colombia. FLIP was founded in 1996, as an expression of different journalists as a way to have a technical body to deal with common challenges in the media sector, especially the violations of the freedom of expression in the country, which frequently included threats and assassinations of media journalists, to which no sufficient attention was given by the State, both at local and national level. FLIP elaborated a strategy to make visible this situation by implementing a constant monitoring of the numerous violations with a political back up provided by the promoters and subscribers of the Foundation, who are active and recognized personalities in the media world in the country.

FLIP presented a project to design a methodology, which could provide a technical tool to develop an index to measure freedom of expression. The methodology was applied in the country, and recognized as a technical oriented tool without political motivation, which increased its credibility and become the relevant point of reference for the Government and the country. Since the first application of the tool, attention has been given to the situation and at central level; the country is now considered an example of freedom of expression in the region. FLIP then designed a second project to extend the coverage of the index at the local level, where, due to the existing conflict and the low coverage and interest of the central state, threats to media still occur, and different kinds of persecution have occurred in the last years. The second project was designed to highlight the situation of the media at local level, by conducting a study and producing a documentary about their situation and providing an index on freedom of expression diversified by regions for the all country. As the grantee indicated: “Today the index is a mechanism, or a space, to generate dialogue, it is a constructive instrument which allows for the State to identify a road and not only attend claims”

This allowed FLIP to become a reference point for the State in terms of designing specific actions to be implemented in the framework of the peace process to foster the freedom of expression at national level, and to provide some specific attention on the role of the media in guaranteeing a critical and constructive role during the implementation of the peace agreements.

## *UNDEF Collaboration with FLIP*

FLIP perceived UNDEF as “a collaborative agent with whom it is easy to have a fluid communication without too much protocol”. Although the FLIP “is skeptical about UN’s Bureaucracy, it was surprised to be favored twice during the selection process and the fact that UNDEF does not have an Agency in the country and select its grantees like this, speaks highly of it”. Furthermore, in the design proposal, UNDEF requested more than traditional donors and “this process was formative because it forced us to develop our abilities and competences. We don’t have this kind of learning process with other donors”.

The grantee continued: “Without UNDEF’s support, it wouldn’t have been possible to produce the mechanism to monitor freedom of press in Colombia, and the impact of this index has gone beyond Colombia now that bigger organizations around the globe that promote the freedom of press have now tools to measure it not only at national levels, but also regionally and at local level, indicating where the problems are geographically”. This successful result is not only due to the willingness of UNDEF to cooperate with organizations, but to the fact that “UNDEF really understands that giving financial support to civil society means giving them political support...it gives the organization some kind of recognition, the one that makes you feel that you are doing things well. It also generates trust and so you put effort into the work you are doing to show how worthy it is”.

The grantee continued: “It is an intermittent relationship, with lots of concentration whenever there are issues that need to be solved, but then there is no contact. It is a very respectful relationship, although there is an excess of care in the formal things and a bit unconcerned towards results.” It would be interesting if UNDEF could use the experience of its grantees to strengthen relations among CSOs, “UNDEF has the opportunity of constructing bridges and it is a thematic partner and we should have a more profound dialogue regarding democracy”. FLIP also thinks that “if UNDEF has funds to strengthen democracy, this needs to be done with long-term actions and not specific projects, interventions of this type require continuity and this could be done without involving too much funds, but offering a follow-up, and by escalating successful projects to other donors or other UN agencies, so great ideas can continue to be funded.”

### *Impact on beneficiaries*

FLIP’s freedom of expression index is recognized in the country as a reference point to measure the freedom of the press at national level. “Thanks to it, the President of the Republic announced the creation of a public policy for guaranteeing freedom of expression in Colombia, which has already started...It also contributed to strengthening the dialogue between the Presidency and FLIP, positioning it as leader of the discussion on freedom of expression to a whole new level.”

The project made an impact also at regional and local level where things are changing “in a very positive way because it allowed people to understand the situations in the regions and I think that without this project, this couldn’t have been possible.” The grantee gave further details: “Well, of course, it’s no secret that there is no freedom of expression in the Regions due to armed groups. The presence of this particular project has contributed to generate more pressure upon the military structures. You can feel more freedom to express yourself.”

The project had an impact also in marginalized regions of the country since "it gave visibility and made people feel that they are part of something... You can see how previously victims didn't feel the freedom nor the confidence to express what they felt before the project. Today this is different because they no longer feel marginalized and have the space to speak out as victims".

The project also changed the relationship amongst journalists and the public sector, and generated a mechanism for citizens to participate; this space is vital for democracy: "Now we have to guarantee our freedom of expression, and to request the authority to respect our space. The commander of the military zone has changed after watching the documentary and now they are more tolerant and flexible. They also give out their reports publicly; they no longer hide the information from us".

### *Sustainability issues*

The project continued thanks to support from UNDEF. But to implement the index is costly and it could only be replicated only two times since the first index was produced. Without the necessary funds, "the project can't move forward at this moment, it needs a bigger outreach in order to be able to continue but till this date this hasn't happened".

There is however social and cultural sustainability since the State has initiated different actions that can assure long lasting attention to the issue of freedom of expression. The real problem is that in middle-income countries, the availability of international funds has drastically reduced, leading to a situation where different sectors of the society have been limited in the opportunity to express their voices. In terms of UNDEF, the possibility to fund for longer periods of time and to maintain a stronger presence in middle-income countries are two of the lessons learned from these projects.

### *Reflections/recommendations*

In the majority of the projects evaluated in this report, it is possible to affirm that an interaction between the public and private sector is fundamental for achieving results; however, in this case study, this finding was not true. FLIP did not negotiate its space with the Government, it based its strategy on maintaining a technical professionalism, independence, objectivity and a constructive attitude, which was backed up by the media sector and could position the CSO in the national debate.

So, technicality, professionalism and a constructive attitude are other ingredients that can contribute to democracy, and allow for recognition and validation of the information offered, which is another way of building democracy without a formal need for a dialogue. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the index is part of a broader FLIP strategy, and an instrument in order to gain a space within the public debate in the country, with attention to the freedom of expression, not limited to media, but to society in general. As such, it is not the goal of FLIP, but a means to an end.