

## UNDEF's new call for proposals opens 4 November

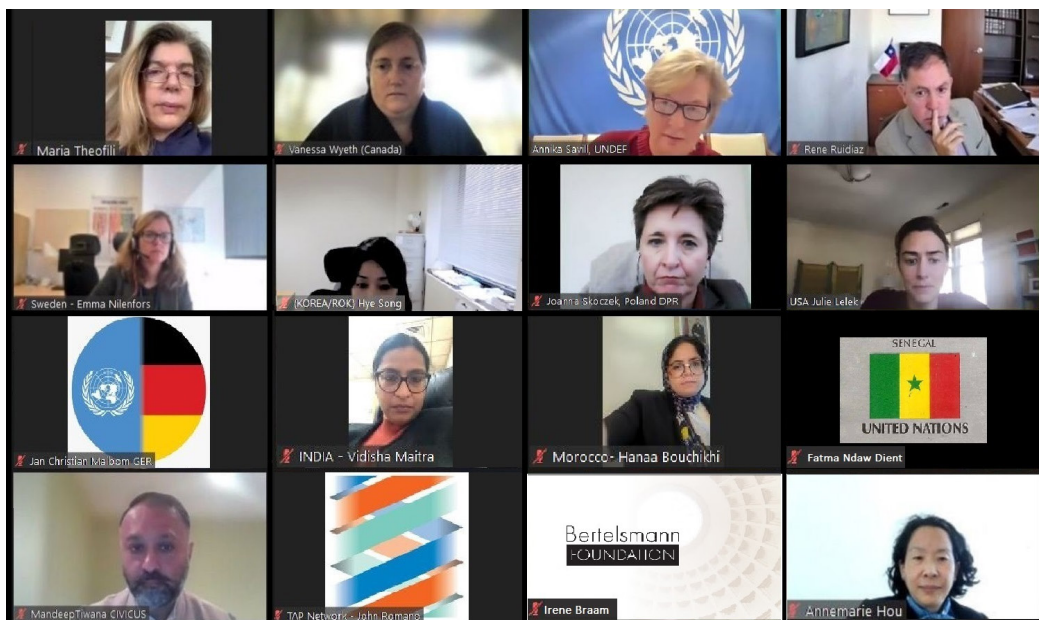
UNDEF's annual call for project proposals is open from 4 November 2021 to 6 December 2021 after receiving the green light from the UNDEF Advisory Board on 20 October. Project proposals may be submitted on-line only in English or French, the two working languages of the UN, at [www.un.org/democracyfund](http://www.un.org/democracyfund). Applicants can find guidelines, FAQs and lessons learned for applicants [here](#).

This is the Sixteenth Round to be launched by UNDEF, which provides grants of up to US\$300,000 per project. Since 2006, UNDEF has supported more than 800 projects in over 100 countries at a total amount of almost US\$200 million. The vast majority of projects are two years long. UNDEF invites project proposals covering one or more of eight thematic areas:

- Women's empowerment
- Community activism
- Rule of law and human rights
- Youth engagement
- Strengthening civil society interaction with Government
- Media and freedom of information
- Tools for knowledge
- Electoral processes

In 2020, UNDEF received almost 2,000 project proposals. Project proposals are subject to a highly rigorous and competitive selection process, quality vetting, due diligence and lessons learned from previous rounds, with fewer than two per cent of proposals chosen for funding. A team of international assessors score each proposal against 10 set criteria and produce a long list. To narrow down the list further, UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams are invited to provide comments, quality assessment, and views on how proposed activities would fit into the existing UN work in the countries and fields proposed.

Based on this collective input, the UNDEF Secretariat produces a first short-list, expected to be confirmed mid-2022, after which the process moves into the next stage. Each short-listed applicant will be contacted with a request for a draft project document, which forms the foundations for a contract between UNDEF and the grantee. The project document negotiation requires the applicant to provide a more elaborate project structure and involves detailed input from both UNDEF and the applicant. Only upon successful conclusion of the project document negotiation will the project proposal formally be approved for funds disbursement – usually after September every year.

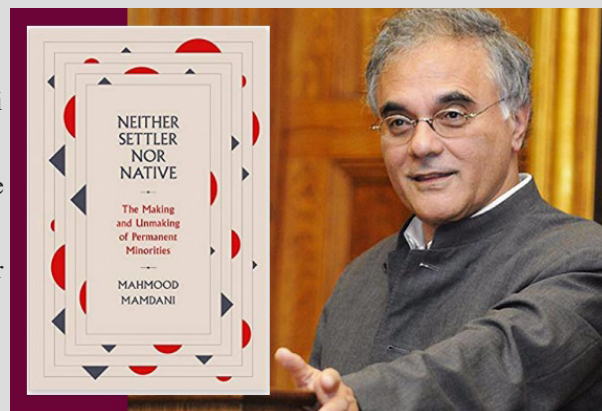


## UNDEF Board Member Mamdani named top thinker for 2021

UNDEF Board member Mahmood Mamdani is named by *Prospect* magazine as one of the world's top 50 thinkers for 2021, a list defined as "the outstanding minds who are shaping the future". It cites Mamdani's 2020 book *Neither Settler Nor Native*, which grapples with the reasons so many States struggle to accommodate minorities. Mamdani concludes that the colonial "define and rule" attitude towards ethnic or religious minorities lives on in post-colonial states, noting that such politicization of identity -- or even identity politics -- can lead to extreme violence. Mamdani sees some hope in the post-apartheid South African model.

*Neither Settler Nor Native* was [short-listed](#) for the 2021 British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding.

Mamdani is Chancellor of Kampala International University; Professor of Government, Anthropology, Political Science and African Studies at Columbia University; and Director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research, Kampala.





## Useful tips for future applicants

The following advice to applicants for UNDEF grants is based on the selection of proposals in previous UNDEF Rounds. It provides useful pointers for you to bear in mind as you prepare your proposal.

### Presentation

The higher the quality of the presentation, the higher your application will score. You can get an idea of what is required by viewing [project proposal guidelines](#). Complete all relevant information, but do not exceed the character limits in the proposal form. Ensure that the information is accurate. Write in plain English or French, avoiding jargon where possible. Use correct acronyms and website addresses. Write succinct sentences and avoid repetition.

### Clarity

Clarity is the key to a successful proposal. You should have a clear idea about what you want to achieve and a clear strategy for how to achieve it. You need to spell out the link between your overall objective and your expected outcomes -- how these will translate your vision into reality. Lack of clarity cannot be disguised by the use of “buzz” words or other formulaic constructions; a successful design requires a logic that can be followed step by step. Brainstorm the ideas thoroughly before writing them down, but equally, agree on what specific steps are needed to make them happen, and in what sequence. Play the “devil’s advocate” and criticise the initial ideas until you have achieved a logical design.

### Scoring and criteria

In UNDEF’s initial assessment of proposals, each project proposal is scored against 10 criteria. Since an average two per cent of proposals make it to the short-list, you need to score well on all the criteria to advance to the next stage. Make sure you demonstrate that your proposal satisfies each one:

1. The project promotes the objectives of UNDEF
2. The project draws on the United Nations’ comparative advantage
3. The project will have a significant impact
4. The project will encourage inclusiveness
5. The project will enhance gender equality
6. The project has strong prospects for successful implementation
7. The applicant organization has a strong track record
8. The project is technically sound in conception and presentation
9. The project represents good value for money
10. The project has strong prospects of sustainability beyond the project duration.

### Innovation

How can your proposal stand out from the others? The answer is innovation. That means a new idea, a new method or an original proposal. If the outputs of the project are simply more workshops to raise awareness, then your proposal is unlikely to distinguish itself. When you think of innovative approaches, ensure that the proposal is action-oriented, with concrete outputs listed in the proposal.

### Democratic processes

UNDEF was established not simply to fund good causes or good people. Arguing that your cause is just and your people are worthy is not sufficient. UNDEF focuses on supporting the voice of civil society to engage with government and policy makers and to make change, so the proposal must show how civil society actors will be strengthened, and how that, in turn, will strengthen democratic processes. The more direct the link, the stronger the proposal.

### Budget

Give considerable thought to the budget. Make sure the budget relates to the outputs listed in the narrative part of the proposal. We understand that the budget is an estimate, so use rounded figures (in the thousands or hundreds is sufficient). Do not ask for a high amount of salary in the budget, as UNDEF looks for an element of volunteering in proposals. Do not ask for a high amount in other items as a back door method to obtain more salary. Also be aware that UNDEF rarely funds the purchase of vehicles.

### Value for money

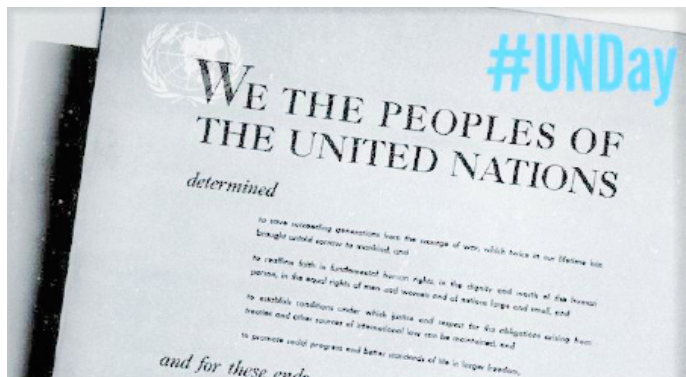
Many proposals have scored badly on the criterion “value for money” by asking for far too much in their budget. The maximum grant UNDEF can make is \$300,000. The average grant is around \$220,000. A proposal requesting \$300,000, but delivering the same outputs as a similar proposal asking for \$200,000, will score low on value for money. That will probably be enough to knock that proposal out of the running. The more realistic the budget request, the better the score will be under the value for money criterion.

### Timing

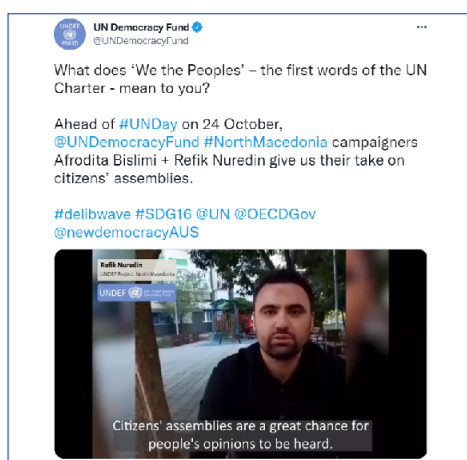
Please do not leave submission until the last few days. Given that the proposal window is open for four weeks, a well prepared applicant will submit well ahead of the deadline to ensure there is time left if something goes wrong. The later in the proposal process, the greater the risk that something may go wrong that cannot be remedied. And once the online proposal system is closed for the year, we cannot assist you. We have received dozens of “hard luck” stories about bad internet connections or electricity blackouts to explain why a proposal was late. The answer is to start in time.



# Citizens' assemblies give life to 'We the Peoples' ahead of UN Day



UNDEF prepared and ran a social media [campaign](#) in the week leading up to UN Day, celebrating the opening words of the UN Charter, 'We the Peoples' by advancing the concept of 'citizens' assemblies'. Such assemblies, typically of some 100 people meeting for a total of about 40 hours, use a random selection of citizens from all age groups and demographics to ensure true representation, so as to overcome mistrust of experts and polarized positions on divisive and highly politicized issues. It has been piloted by UNDEF in a number of countries, including on Covid-19 responses and vaccine hesitancy. The approach is best known for paving the way for reforms in Ireland on protracted issues such as abortion, population ageing, marriage equality, and climate change.



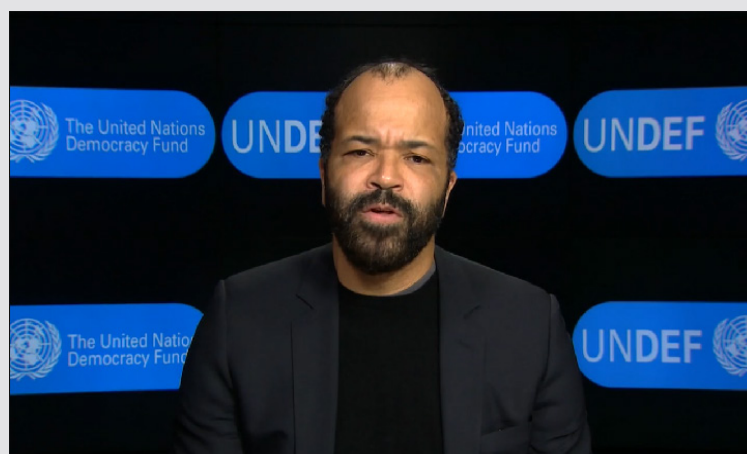
## 007 and UNDEF

The release in October 2021 of the new 007 film *No Time to Die* sees the return of Jeffrey Wright, UNDEF Board Member Emeritus, in the co-starring role of Felix Leiter, James Bond's American partner. This is the fifth Bond film in which Jeffrey Wright appears in the role.

**TOP SECRET**

**CLASSIFIED**

Here is another of Jeffrey Wright's repeat roles -- narrator of UNDEF project documentaries. Please watch him in [Prisoners of the Caucasus](#), and in [Legislators of Sierra Leone](#) -- a country where Jeffrey has long campaigned to empower rural communities, foster entrepreneurship, and advance conflict-free mining.



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

# Ninth Athens Democracy Forum with UNDEF and New York Times

UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill participated virtually in the ninth annual Athens Democracy Forum, which has been held in cooperation with *The New York Times* and UNDEF since the Forum first launched in 2013. Learn more about the Forum [here](#), and read Annika Savill's message [here](#). Since 2013, the Forum has grown from a small two hour-event to a four-day international conference with speakers such as, this year, Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis; former President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves; Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz; artist Ai Weiwei; and voting rights activist Stacey Abrams.



## UNDEF activists speak up on International Day of Democracy

UNDEF and Kofi Annan Foundation joined forces in a social media campaign ahead of the International Day of Democracy. The campaign featured [short films](#) with some of UNDEF's activists, focusing on what democracy means for young people, and the need to address global injustices highlighted by the pandemic crisis -- including access to education. UNDEF project activists were featured from around the world. The campaign complemented the Secretary-General's [message](#) for the International Day of Democracy which emphasized the need to learn from the lessons of the past 18 months to strengthen democratic resilience in the face of future crises, and to prepare for phasing out emergency powers and laws as the worst of the pandemic subsides, as such powers can seep into legal frameworks and become permanent.

“Despite witnessing my country suffering from multiple crises, my hope in democracy remains. I will continue to fight and join forces with grassroots organizations and activists to revive and rebuild our democracy.”

Ghida Anani  
Founder and Director, ABAAD

