

UNDEF Board approves 34 project proposals in new Round

UNDEF's Advisory Board met on 11 April 2022 and endorsed a short-list of 34 projects for its 16th Round of funding totaling over \$7.5 million dollars.

While the short list includes some proposed projects in Ukraine, and a related proposal in a neighbouring state, UNDEF will need over time to explore further what will be possible under local capacity and conditions in Ukraine, in close consultation with civil society partners on the ground. It may also be possible to add more projects in neighbouring countries.

In this Round, UNDEF received 2,121 project proposals from organizations in 126 countries, the vast majority local NGOs, reflecting continuing high demand. Proposals originated from Africa, Arab States, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, adding further to the growth the Fund has experienced since its creation in 2005 and bringing the total number of projects supported by the Fund to more than 880.

The short list is the product of a thorough and rigorous process. A team of 13 international experts -- combining extensive programme and project experience -- assessed each proposal against 10 set criteria and produced a long list of 195 project proposals. To narrow down the list further, UN Resident Coordinators were invited to provide comments, quality vetting, and views on how proposed activities would fit with existing work in the countries and fields proposed. Based on this collective input, the short list was produced.



Of the short-listed project proposals: 23 per cent are in Arab States; 26 per cent in Africa; 18 per cent in Asia and Pacific; 15 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean; 15 per cent in Europe, and 1 per cent with a global focus. Broken down by key activity, 29 per cent of project proposals are in rule of law and human rights; 21 per cent in youth engagement; 21 per cent in women's empowerment; 11 per cent in support to electoral processes; 9 per cent in strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government; and 9 per cent in media and freedom of information.

Once no-objection has been sought from Governments of countries where projects are envisaged, the list goes to the Secretary-General for review and approval. The proposals move into the final stage in the selection process: the negotiation of a project document, which is in effect the contract between UNDEF and the grantee. This requires the applicant to provide a more elaborated project design, and involves comprehensive guidance, input and review by UNDEF. Only upon successful conclusion of this process will the project formally be approved for funding.

The Advisory Board comprises those UN Member States who have made the largest cumulative financial contributions to the Fund over the previous three years; a number of UN Member States reflecting geographical diversity; international civil society organizations; and individuals serving in a personal capacity.



Mission to two Chile projects in support of constitutional deliberations

An UNDEF project in Chile works to promote women's participation and gender content in Chile's current constitutional process; advance women's understanding of a new constitution's importance to them and their rights; generate debates on key gender issues; advocate for the inclusion of gender aspects in the drafting process. The project is implemented by Corporación Humanas.

UNDEF Project Officer Jaime Palacios visited the project in Santiago in March 2022.



The initiative will strengthen the participation and voice of socially marginalised groups in the Valparaíso region

Jaime Palacios also met in Valparaíso with a new UNDEF project to be launched this year, also designed to support Chile's current constitutional process. Implemented by the **Universidad de Valparaíso**, the initiative will strengthen the participation and voice of socially marginalized groups in constitutional and public policy deliberations in the Valparaíso region. Community organizations will participate in collaborative training on deliberative democratic spaces, and on ways to formulate and communicate demands. Ultimately, they will interact directly with government authorities.



UNDEF marks decade of work with Tunisia's civil society

Tunisia has been a priority country for UNDEF for the past decade, with 18 UNDEF projects there since 2012 – not least in the crucial area of youth empowerment. Several of UNDEF's current and completed projects directly support young people's participation in public and political life, including opportunities yielded by Tunisia's ongoing decentralization process. One project works in Kairouan, Béja, Jendouba, Mahdia, and Tunis to build young people's capacity to take part in community affairs and local governance. Implemented by **Tamkeen For Development**, it trains young people to conduct social audits, with the results published on dedicated platforms; to establish and run a social innovation unit for community projects addressing local needs; to promote awareness and accountability among elected local officials; to bring young people and the larger community closer together. The project was conceived in light of results of Tunisia's 2018 municipal elections, which confirmed low levels of youth participation even as the ongoing decentralization process presented new opportunities for increased youth involvement in governance and accountability.

Another project builds on the opportunity of Tunisia's decentralization process to empower young citizens from marginalized regions. Implemented by the **Observatoire Tunisien de l'Economie**, it works to build a youth-led movement for development in El Kef, Medenine, and Kairouan, seeking to integrate young marginalized



people into local governance with roles in monitoring public projects, analyzing central authorities policies, identifying the development potential of their regions, and formulating recommendations to local authorities. Working methods, training, and technical tools are developed in parallel with raising awareness on decentralization and democratic participation in remote regions.

A third ongoing project works to engage young citizen journalists and bloggers in national efforts to fight hate speech and violent extremism in Tunisia. Covering Tunis, El Kef, Jandouba, Beja, Sousse, Monastir, Kasserine, Sidibouzeid, Kairouan, Sfax, Gafsa, Touzer, and Medenine, it focuses on producing alternative media; promoting peer-learning for awareness of human rights; and mobilizing local communities against violent extremism. Implemented by the **Arab Institute for Human Rights**, the project incorporates responses to the Covid-19 crisis in countering misinformation and supporting journalists on the front line.

Another project works in marginalized natural resource-producing regions to empower civil society organizations and local journalists to influence policy reform. Implemented by the **Natural Resource Governance Institute**, the project works in Gafsa, Tattauine, and Kébili to build capacity, targeted advocacy and investigative products that inform public opinion on local demands and issues. Ultimately, the project will support the institutionalization of venues for multi-stakeholder natural resource reform through the platforms of the Open Government Partnership and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

UNDEF Senior Project Officer Christian Lamarre visited the above projects in November 2021, participating in workshops and milestone activities.

To ensure an exchange of lessons learned and best practices, Christian Lamarre also held a roundtable with eight completed UNDEF projects in Tunisia: Kif-Kif Women and

Men, implemented by the **Free Sight Association**; Promoting Gender Equality in Decision-Making in Six Regions of Tunisia, implemented by the **Tunisian Association for Management and Social Stability**; Observatory for Minority Rights in Tunisia, implemented by the **Association pour la Promotion du Droit à la Différence**; Women and Men as Equal in Partners in Local Government in Tunisia, implemented by **Lam Echaml**; Building Public Participation, Trust and Transparency in Local Government in Tunisia, implemented by **Action Associative**; Entrepreneurship for Participation and Inclusion of Vulnerable Youth, implemented by **Tamkeen For Development**; Promoting Local and Participatory Democracy, implemented by **Observatoire Chahed**; Support for Civil Society and Constitutional Processes in Decentralization and Governance, implemented by **Développement Sans Frontières**. These projects were the focus of an independent meta-evaluation of UNDEF's work in Tunisia published here in 2021.

Community broadcasters advance gender justice in Kyrgyzstan

An UNDEF project in Kyrgyzstan completed its work to strengthen the transformative role of community-based media in reducing gender-based violence, including amid the surge of such violence as a result of pandemic lockdowns and economic pressures. Implemented by the **Community Media Association of Kyrgyzstan**,

the project promoted positive role models for women in their respective communities, while building capacity among journalists, women activists, and rural women to produce and disseminate gender-sensitive community information through community radio and television. Through national round tables, it strengthened structured engagement between activists,



media, and local authorities on gender-based violence and gender equality. Journalists nationwide gained a more comprehensive understanding of the issues, bringing better balance to media reporting on gender-based violence and how to combat it.

The project promoted positive role models for women in their communities

Dialogue for sustainable and accountable forest management in Viet Nam

UNDEF's project in Vietnam works to strengthen regular dialogues between civil society and government agencies for more transparency and accountability in the forestry sector. The project has developed a forest change independent monitoring system, using near real-time satellite technology, and builds the capacity of civil society organizations to collect evidence using the system to verify forest changes in the Da Krong District. Implemented by the **Centre for Sustainable Rural Development**, the project holds regular open dialogues with local authorities to ensure that they identify causes



of unplanned forest losses and prevent further deterioration.

The citizen-based monitoring system, which functions well,

offers the possibility for scaling up and for being included in an emission reduction programme currently pending Government approval. Beneficiaries are trained

in using Terra-I maps and GPS, enabling them to read and extract forest change information, as well as use GPS equipment to identify the position of a forest loss spot. For the first time, households and civil society organizations can access technology, training and data from the monitoring system to communicate with villagers and local officials about real time information on forest loss in their areas. Under local community management, beneficiaries make monthly validation trips to the forest to collect data which they report back to Commune People Committees and local rangers for action.

Nepal women take on local leadership

An UNDEF project in Nepal works to strengthen gender-responsive local governance, with a focus on the rights of marginalized and indigenous women in the Ichhakmana and Kalika municipalities of Chitwan. The initiative encourages women to assume decision-making positions in local government, which in turn helps engage other women in the community to lead advocacy campaigns for

Chepong women's leadership and participation. During November and December 2021, the project engaged over 5000 members of the Chepong community in the annual international campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, addressing root causes such as child marriage, polygamy, gambling, and substance abuse. The campaign included a radio series of 65 episodes, and was covered in the local news.



The project also identified male role models to provide a supportive environment for women leadership. The participants were sensitized on gender equality, local planning processes and gender responsive budgets. They were then active in advocacy for Chepong women's participation in local planning processes and budget allocation.

Implemented by the **Development Exchange Center of Nepal**, the initiative builds on a previous project

The initiative encourages women to assume decision making positions in local government

by the same organization. The project's efforts will be replicated by other municipalities in the future.



Mongolia project strengthens media freedom and access to quality information in digital age

An UNDEF project in Mongolia works to strengthen the capacity of local media and civil society to ensure media freedom and quality journalism amid challenges of the digital era. Implemented by the **Press Institute of Mongolia**, it trains journalists in data analysis, fact-checking and verification, digital research, as well as journalistic safety and security of journalists. At least two thirds of the journalists trained were women. The project also trains civil society organizations in understanding the current media landscape and developing storytelling and production skills.

The project comes amid a range of challenges for

Mongolia's media, including weak implementation of laws for media freedom and access to information; a risk of expanding political control of media; shrinking civic space; and growing public distrust of journalism.

Historically, Mongolian journalists' have little experience of working in the digital environment and safeguarding against information manipulation, while civil society activists lack advocacy skills to effectively address transparency and governance issues in the context of digitization. The project will help them network and address issues on the public agenda.



Building media knowhow to strengthen rural voices in Bhutan

An UNDEF project in Bhutan works to strengthen local news coverage and build relationships between journalists and rural communities, which make up almost 70 per cent of the population yet lack access to government agencies and ways to influence policy. Implemented by the **Journalists' Association of Bhutan**, the project encourages local villages to engage in active reporting on local issues, training journalists and community members alike to report both in mainstream news outlets and social media -- thus counterbalancing the concentration of media in the capital. Since 2019, the project has conducted community media workshops in rural districts Dagana, Lhuentse, Bumthang, Gasa, Mongar, Trongsa, and Haa, including on ways to engage with



traditional media technology, how to disseminate news systematically using social media, understanding government social media policies. The project builds on a previous UNDEF project with the Journalists' Association of Bhutan to support capacity building of member journalists.

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