The UN Secretary-General has approved a short list of 52 project proposals for UNDEF’s Eighth Round of Funding, following recommendations by the United Nations Democracy Fund Advisory Board.

UNDEF’s Eighth Round of Funding comes amid upheavals in several parts of the world. Both civil society groups and media continue to face growing pressures and restrictions. The role of popular movements on the one hand and military intervention on the other is hotly debated, with no global consensus on either. At the same time, apathy among the disenchanted and disempowered is becoming an insidious and increasingly stubborn enemy of democracy. Media’s revolutionizing impact in democratization processes is confronted by the need to safeguard its freedom in the face of growing pressures in several countries.

The shortlisted proposals were taken from over 2,000 project proposals received in UNDEF’s annual call for proposals, which closed on 31 December 2013. The proposals originated from organizations in 133 countries, the vast majority local NGOs in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. UNDEF congratulates all those short-listed, and thanks all who applied.

The short list is the product of a thorough and rigorous process of assessment, quality vetting, due diligence and lessons learned from previous Rounds. A team of six international assessors combining more than 80 years of programme and project experience scored each proposal against 10 set criteria and produced a long-short-list of some 250 project proposals. To narrow down the list further, UN Resident Coordinators and Experts of the UNDEF Advisory Board were invited to provide comments, quality vetting, and views on how proposed activities would fit in the overall context of existing UN work in the countries and fields proposed. The same comments were sought from the UNDEF Programme Consultative Group, making use of the specific expertise of each of its entities: the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the UN Development Programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women.

Based on this collective input, the UNDEF Secretariat produced a short list of projects with. 30 per cent in Africa, followed by 25 per cent in Asia, 16 per cent in the Arab world, 11 per cent in Europe and 5 per cent in Latin America.

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Project proposals in the category of media, including new media, constitute some 40 per cent of projects on the short list — reflecting both the indispensable role of new and old media in advancing democracy from the ground up, and the need to support freedom of expression at a time of increasing challenges and restrictions in this area in a number of countries. Some 11 per cent are in rule of law and human rights; 20 per cent in community development; and 4 per cent in women’s empowerment.

Inclusion in the short list is a significant achievement. But it does not in itself mean that the project proposal will be approved for funding. Applicants are now required to complete the final stage of the selection process — negotiating a Project Document with UNDEF, which is in effect a contract between the grantor and the grantee. Only with the satisfactory conclusion of a project document, and its approval by the United Nations Controller, will the proposed project be formally approved for funds disbursement.

Given the number of proposals, it is not possible for UNDEF to contact unsuccessful applicants individually. If applicants have not yet received an email from UNDEF, they can assume that their proposals are not on the final short list.

The next window for project proposals is expected to open in mid-November. We encourage future applicants to start preparing now by going to the UNDEF website and reading project proposal guidelines, lessons learned for applicants, frequently asked questions and summaries of existing projects.
ANAYSIS OF UNDEF’S EIGHT ROUND PROJECT SELECTIONS

Projects by region

Projects by key activity

Projects by location type
UNDEF Update – No. 15, August 2012

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

For alternatives to prison in the South Caucasus

An UNDEF-funded project works for alternatives to prison sentencing in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The goal is to promote the effective use of non-custodial and early release measures to challenge the overuse of imprisonment, help decrease the prison population and build proportionate responses to crime. The project works to help develop a probation system in Armenia and Azerbaijan -- currently completely lacking in both countries -- while supporting community service and early release through parole. Special focus is given to women and juvenile offenders. UNDEF Executive Head a. i. Annika Savill visited inmates in cells at Armenia’s high-security and overcrowded Nubarashen prison, and met with prison officials as well as with the Armenian Civil Society Institute, which is partnering with Penal Reform International South Caucasus to implement the project.

Cascading skills among youth in Costa Rica

An UNDEF-funded project in Costa Rica works to promote leadership and citizenship skills among disadvantaged youth. In March 2014, the project held a train-the-trainers camp for 50 adolescents, with skills to be implemented as part of a cascading process in their communities. Sessions focused on teamwork, gender, democracy, participation mechanisms and assertive communication. The participants will soon take charge of the cascading process in cooperation with organizations working in the cantons of Desamparados, Curridabat, and La Unión. The project is implemented by the Paniamor Foundation.


Towards an alternative model of natural resource governance in Indonesia

An UNDEF-funded project works in Indonesia’s Aceh province to improve the capacity of local indigenous communities to develop, advocate and institute an alternative model of natural resource governance. The aim is to promote the participation and protect the rights of local communities, foster environmental sustainability, and advance the interests of vulnerable and marginalized populations. The project builds awareness of the successful experience of four mukims, or subdistrict subdivisions, that have already implemented an alternative model, while enhancing the capacity of other mukim communities to implement alternative environmental governance and advocate alternative models. The project is implemented by Perkumpulan Prodeelat. UNDEF’s Deputy head Mikiko Sawanishi visited the project’s activities in the mukim of Lampanh, pictured, in July 2014.

Giving new voice to women in Nepal

An UNDEF-financed Nepal project works to increase women’s participation at the most basic level of local governance, through Ward Citizen Forums. It educates women in democratic rights and gender-responsive budgeting, making them more vocal in their demands in the decision-making process. The project uses a range of awareness-building tools such as street theatre, public service announcements and television documentaries. Recent street theatre events were held in Sunsari and Dhankuta Districts. The project is implemented by Media Initiative for Rights, Equity and Social Transformation processes.
UnDEF Update – No. 22, August 2014

WORTH READING: UNDEF in the media

UNDEF-funded, award-winning local newspaper empowers rural women in India

UNDEF-funded Khabar Lahariya is an award-winning rural weekly newspaper published in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in local languages and run by a collective of 40 rural women journalists. In May, it won Deutsche Welle’s Global Media Forum Award. “The newspaper is a shining example that a functioning democracy is dependent on access to information for all people,” said the jury. Rising Voices spoke with Khabar Lahariya’s editorial coordinator to find out how it works.

Computerized vocational training for Indian women is ‘a model for the world’

In the course of 18 months, over 3,000 women were trained by 28 UNDEF-funded Ammachi Labs’ Women Empowerment Centres across Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In the process, they set up 30 self-help groups, seven small businesses, and earned a collective income of more than one million rupees within three months of completing the course. The project capstone event was covered by The New India Express and Amritapuri.org.
Engaging young people on hot policy issues in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia

An UNDEF-funded project in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia met in Hammamet, Tunisia, in June to engage youth and civil society in proposed government policies on unemployment, school dropout rates and violence. The event, covered in Morocco World News, was part of the UNDEF-funded project to engage civil society and youth in public policy dialogue in North Africa, implemented by the Moroccan Center for Civic Education. In May, the project held an event with the Moroccan Journalists Union in Bouznika, gathering civil society leaders, youth and university students together with journalists and mass media representatives. It was featured in Maroc.ma.

Ghana plan provides roadmap for democracy education

The National Democracy Education Action Plan for Ghana is the result of a robust collaboration between civil society and government, as a pilot project funded by UNDEF and implemented by the Council for a Community of Democracies. Intended as a roadmap for deepening and expanding democracy education to be used by civil society leaders, the Ministry of Education, and other key stakeholders, it is in keeping with two United Nations resolutions: UNGA Resolution A/67/L.25 on “Education for Democracy;” and UNESCO Resolution 37 C/4/DR.6, both of which call on Member States and UN agencies to provide greater support for democracy education.