

Dear friends of the UN Democracy Fund,

Welcome to UNDEF Update No.2. This is peak season for UNDEF, as we approach the final selection from more than 2,100 project applications received for our Third Round of Funding -- a response which reflected unprecedented interest in the Fund.

In this issue's **Inside UNDEF** section, we report on the April meeting of our Advisory Board, which considered the final project short list for recommendation to the Secretary-General. Our Practitioner Profile slot features one of our new Advisory Board members, Dr. Ashraf Ghani. And we reach out to our applicants and constituents with feedback and lessons learnt so far, as well as with an appeal to let us know about plans worldwide for the second International Day of Democracy on 15 September.

The **News from the Field** section again provides a rich sampling of our projects around the world -- from a groundbreaking meeting in Washington on campaign financing and a landmark conference in Cotonou on democratic alternation in Africa, to exciting efforts on the ground in China, Pakistan, Palestine, Afghanistan, and Sierra Leone.

Finally, **Worth Reading** links you to a landmark book on African democracy from the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, published with UNDEF backing; and two new publications in the current lively debate on U.S. democracy support: *Democracy in U.S. Security Strategy*, by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and *Revitalizing U.S. Democracy Promotion: A Comprehensive Plan for Reform*, by the New America Foundation. Both recommend continued and expanded U.S. funding for UNDEF. There is also an interview I gave to the World Federation of UN Associations, which looks in greater depth at the UNDEF story so far.

Happy reading.

Roland Rich
Executive Head

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INSIDE UNDEF

Governments pledge new funds to UNDEF, sign off on project list to Secretary-General



The Advisory Board met on 21 April and approved recommendations for projects in the Third Round of Funding. The Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, joined the meeting, which brought together the seven biggest donors -- the United States, India, Japan, Qatar, Australia, Germany and France -- and six countries reflecting geographical balance -- Botswana, Lebanon, Mongolia, Panama, Slovenia and Trinidad and Tobago. The meeting was chaired by Professor Michael Doyle, and attended by individual members Ms. Sanam Anderlini and Dr. Ashraf Ghani, as well as civil society representatives the Asia Society and Femmes Africa Solidarité.

India, the U.S. and Germany all announced new contributions to UNDEF, in the case of the U.S. pending Congressional approval. "The United States is proud to be a founding member of UNDEF," said Ambassador Alejandro Wolff. "The fact that there were a record number of applications in the Third Round is a testament to the impact UNDEF projects are having." India's Acting Permanent Representative, Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri, noted that whereas the word "democracy" did not appear in the UN Charter, "democratic" appeared in the very beginning of the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. With the ongoing parliamentary elections, spread over five rounds from 16 April to 13 May, India was in the midst of the "largest democratic exercise in the world". He noted that the latest 5 million-dollar contribution from India -- also an UNDEF founding member and its second largest donor -- had already been disbursed. For fellow founding member Germany, Ambassador Martin Ney said his country was determined to continue its firm support for UNDEF. Announcing its intention to contribute a further 1.5 million dollars for the upcoming Round, he hoped this may encourage other donors to contribute as well.

The Deputy Secretary-General, attending for the first time, said: "UNDEF is unique in many ways. You are the only United Nations entity whose name contains the word "democracy". By working directly with civil society to seed democracy from within, you support the demand side of democracy, rather than the supply side. By lending the United Nations brand to a project, you bestow a convening power and multiplier effect that generates more democracy initiatives. And you operate independently of the Organization's relationship with individual Governments.

"I am proud of the leadership UNDEF is showing in forging stronger democratic participation and governance. The Secretary-General and I offer our profound support as you embark on this Third Round of Funding."

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INSIDE UNDEF

Let's democratize the International Day of Democracy



The second International Day of Democracy (IDD) will be held on 15 September. It is observed annually on that date following its designation by General Assembly Resolution 62/7 in 2007, to commemorate the adoption of the [Universal Declaration on Democracy](#) by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1997.

The first IDD was celebrated by the United Nations General Assembly and by the Inter-Parliamentary Union as well as by 40 [national parliaments](#). UNDEF held an [event](#) to discuss its work and to listen to voices from the field.

In 2009, there will again be many events organized by intergovernmental and representative bodies to celebrate IDD. UNDEF urges civil society organizations to join the party and organize their own activities on this auspicious day, complementing official celebrations. It could be seminars or workshops -- for example, analyzing the Universal Declaration of Democracy and asking how well it is implemented in each country; exhibitions or film showings; essay, drawing or painting competitions; book readings or reviews; or simply informal gatherings for discussions. Whatever the type of event, it



will contribute to strengthening the understanding of democracy.

UNDEF wants to showcase these IDD activities being held by civil society around the world. We ask you

to write a brief story about your observance and take some interesting photos and email them to us at democracyfund@un.org soon after your event takes place, and we will display them on a special page on our website. This way, you will be able to share your activity with the rest of the world and also learn about what others have done. So get involved and be creative!

Practitioner profile

Dr. Ashraf Ghani, who serves in an individual capacity on the UNDEF Advisory Board for 2009, brings to it unique perspective and experience. A former Finance Minister of Afghanistan and Chancellor of Kabul University, Dr. Ghani is

the co-founder of the Washington-based Institute for State Effectiveness, established in 2005 to promote the ability of States to serve their citizens.

Dr. Ghani is a fervent advocate of the need to empower civil society in developing viable democratic institutions. "Building institutions is worthless in the long term

without investment in human capital," he said on joining the Advisory Board. "I am therefore delighted to be involved in this innovative Fund, which strengthens the voice of civil society in democratization around the world. It does so in varied and imaginative ways, while bringing no historical baggage, political agenda or national interest to the process."

A key adviser to the UN in the work that led to the Bonn Agreement, Dr. Ghani is credited with the design of Afghanistan's integrated political, economic, and security strategy after 2001. He is a member of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor and co-author of *The Framework: Fixing Failed States*.



UNDEF joins forces with IDEA on gender

UNDEF Executive Head Roland Rich was among the panellists at a dialogue entitled "The Gender of Democracy Matters" organized by International IDEA at UN Headquarters on 15 April. The discussion, chaired by Massimo Tommasoli, International IDEA's Permanent Observer to the UN, explored the role of multilateral action -- in particular by the UN -- in working for equal representation of women in national legislatures and Governments.



Other panellists included Ms. Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Chairperson, International IDEA Board and Former Vice Prime Minister of Sweden, and Chilean delegate Ms. Belén Sapag Muñoz de la Peña.

Participants raised the need for gender equality to be written into normative declarations of all countries pursuing democracy. They noted that newer democracies, founded on a notion of equality between women and men, have advanced faster towards equality than older democracies that have taken two centuries to reach the same point.

Quotas were discussed extensively as a necessary short-term strategy, with several participants advocating more extensive use both at the legislative level and as a voluntary tool by political parties. It was suggested that the international community had set the bar for participation too low, and that 50 per cent was a more appropriate aim than the 30 per cent discussed in Beijing. However, Chile, where women's representation has increased from 7 per cent to 15 per cent, was an example of what can be achieved through transparency and accountability rather than quotas. One participant suggested that in the African Union, where a 50-50 rule applied to the election of commissioners, some men candidates who were more qualified were disregarded.

The participants stressed that advancing equality went beyond ensuring women's representation in parliament or in Cabinets. The role of non-State actors was crucial, as reflected in UNDEF's focus on civil society. Mr. Rich said women's empowerment projects were highly significant in UNDEF funding, accounting for around one third of all grants. UNDEF saw these projects as essential to the democratization project. "We know from the development assistance experience that educating girls is the best investment for development. I believe that the participation of women in decision making is to democracy as educating girls is to development."



Lessons learned from applications in the Third Round



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Dear civil society organization applicants,

It might be helpful for us to provide some feedback from the Third Round to help applicants in future funding rounds. UNDEF received 2,143 applications in the Third Round of funding. The independent assessors that scored each application have provided the following feedback.

High “Pass Mark”

Overall, the quality of the applications was higher than in the second round but the “pass mark” was also higher. In the Second Round it was necessary to score at least 30 out of 40 (the 75 per cent point). For the Third Round two additional criteria were added, bringing the total to 50, and it was necessary to score at least 40 (the 80 per cent point). Only 317 projects scored 40 or higher and passed to the next stage of consideration. So the key issue for future applicants is how they can improve their applications to reach the “pass mark”.

Clarity

Clarity is the key to a successful application. That means the applicant must have a clear idea about what their CSO wishes to achieve and a clear strategy about how to achieve it. Clarity of ideas and methods shine through in the good applications. Lack of clarity cannot be disguised with “buzz” words or other formulaic constructions. The best advice is to brainstorm the ideas thoroughly before writing them down. Play the “devil’s advocate” and criticise the initial ideas until you have achieved a clear vision of what your CSO wishes to achieve and how you propose to do it.

Innovation

The assessors each read about 350 applications. Put yourself in their position. By the time they have assessed the 50th, 100th or 200th application, they are finding a great deal of repetition with similar concepts being described using similar words. Only one in seven of the applications they read will go forward for further consideration. So how can your CSO’s application stand out from the others? The answer is – innovation. Assessors will respond to a new idea, a new method or an original proposal. If the outputs of the project are simply more workshops to raise awareness, then it is unlikely that this will be sufficient to distinguish your application from the others. Ensure that the proposal is action oriented with concrete outputs that can be listed in the application.

Democracy

UNDEF was not established simply to fund good causes or good people. Arguing that your cause is just and your people are worthy is not sufficient. UNDEF is a Fund to promote democracy and each application must be able to show how the funding of that project will advance the cause of

democracy. UNDEF focuses on supporting the voice of civil society and so the application must show how that voice will be strengthened and how that will strengthen democracy. The more direct the link, the stronger the application.

Presentation

The higher the quality the presentation, the higher the mark the assessors will give. Read the guidelines and the Q&A section carefully before drafting the application. Fill in all the information that is relevant. Do not exceed the character limits in the application form. Write in plain English or French, avoiding jargon where possible. Use correct acronyms and website

addresses. Write succinct sentences and avoid repetition. Ensure that the information is accurate including in relation to possible executing agency and implementing partners.

Value for Money

Many applications scored badly on the criterion “value for money” by asking for far too much in their budget. The maximum grant UNDEF can make is \$500,000, but in

over 200 projects to date, only one project has received this amount. The average grant is around \$300,000. The value for money criterion is scored out of 5 points. An application requesting \$499,000, but delivering the same outputs as a similar application asking for \$350,000, will probably score only 1 or 2 out of 5 for this criterion. That will probably be enough to knock that application out of the running. The more realistic the budget request, the better the score will be under the value for money criterion.

Budget

Give considerable thought to the budget. Make sure the budget relates to the outputs listed in the narrative part of the application. 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 applications. Do not ask for a high amount in administrative costs as this is often a back door method of obtaining salary. UNDEF rarely funds the purchase of vehicles.

Timing

Please do not leave submission until the final day. We received dozens of “hard luck” stories about bad internet connections or electricity blackouts to explain why an application was late. We could not assist as the online proposal system was closed. Given that there were over six weeks for submission, a well prepared applicant would submit at least several days ahead of the deadline to ensure there is time if something goes wrong.

Good luck in your future applications.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Bridging the communications gap in Palestine

In the occupied Palestinian territory, UNDEF supports efforts to bridge a communication gap between officials and the public – a gap caused by lack of opportunities for the debates and public dialogue that are an essential feature of a democratic society. The majority of Palestinians, while living under movement restrictions due to occupation and closures, have limited access to information and few chances to interact with decision-makers.



This is why UNDEF funds a project the AMIN Media Network/Internews for Strengthening Participatory Democracy and Public Dialogue in Palestine.

Through communication activities, debates and capacity-building, the project works to strengthen democratic processes by fostering participatory dialogue in new and electronic media. The project advances the use of citizen journalism and blogs as a platform for interaction between the people, communities and the Palestinian Authority. It trains journalists and civil society organizations in the production of community radio talk shows and national TV debates on good governance, development and democracy -- tackling issues that affect Palestinian society as a whole, connecting people between the West Bank and Gaza in national dialogue as a remedy for isolation. In this way, it helps build participation by youth, women, as well as marginalized groups in rural areas and refugee camps – including through mobile radio units that reach communities lacking access to media and decision-makers.

AMIN Media Network (www.amin.org) is a Palestinian civil society organization working with UNESCO support to develop and build capacity in the Palestinian media sector.



Women's rights and women's votes in villages of Sindh, Pakistan

In the Sindh Districts of Thatta, Tando Mohd Khan and Badin, fewer than 75 per cent of eligible women are registered voters. In the past two election rounds -- district, provincial and national -- women's voter turnout was below 25 per cent. And while the Constitution of Pakistan spells

motivate women in 680 villages to participate in political life for their own welfare and development; and organize and build capacity through meetings and training to empower women to take collective efforts to protect their rights.

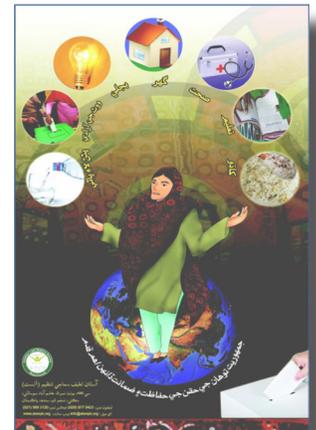
Given the traditional and cultural background of these districts, this mission can be achieved only by also building awareness, motivation and mobilization among men. Thus, the Society organizes separate meetings for men and women. By mid-March 2009, more than 700 such meetings had been conducted in more than 300 villages, complemented by a media campaign through FM radio and print.



out their freedom to vote, women are often forced to cast their ballot for the candidate chosen by their father, husband or brother.

This is why the Aasthan Latif Welfare Society launched its UNDEF-backed initiative "Democracy for Women's Rights". The project aims to educate rural women about their basic constitutional rights, the role and value of democracy, and the power of their votes.

The Society's team of volunteers works to build awareness among women in rural communities about their fundamental constitutional rights; mobilize and



Airtime for accountability in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is at a historic crossroads. There is a crucial and urgent need to build better understanding among citizens about how to engage effectively with elected leaders and demand accountability, transparency and government responsiveness. This requires a significant and sustained investment in media and civil society institutions.

The UNDEF-backed initiative AIRTIME - Accountable Institutions through Radio Transparency Initiatives & Moderated Events - works to answer this need. It uses a three-pronged strategy, a



comprehensive, dynamic and engaging radio series, roundtable discussions and community forums, to motivate and empower citizens to question their leaders. In this way, it seeks to strengthen accountability mechanisms, build up the capacity of government officials to be responsive to citizen demands, and increase access to information for communities across Afghanistan. The project is run by Equal Access International, which works to empower under-served communities across the developing world through life-changing information and education.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

D.C. meeting breaks new ground on campaign finance

In Washington, UNDEF supported a groundbreaking [conference on international campaign finance observation](#) organized by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and the Carter Center.



The two-day event, part of the IFES project on Global Standards for Political Finance, was attended by more than 20 top scholars and practitioners in the field. They discussed global standards of campaign finance, techniques and methodologies to monitor money in politics, and the role of international and domestic NGOs in the observation of campaign finance, concluding with a visit to the United States Federal Elections Commission. “This meeting showed us all that organizations that are dealing with electoral observation and assistance need to coordinate their efforts to monitor political finance,” said Marcin Walecki, Ph.D., IFES senior advisor for political finance and public ethics. “The fact that the meeting happened during the week of Obama’s inauguration has certainly helped. We all left with the feeling that ‘Yes we can!’”

Strengthening dialogue between civil society organizations and Government in China



In China, UNDEF funds a pilot project to empower grassroots organizations and create a more favourable social and legal environment for the development of civil society. The initiative, “Be There and Be Heard”, has three implementing partners: the Center for Nonprofit Organization Law at Beijing University Law School, the School of Social Development and Public Policy at Beijing Normal University and the Beijing Huizeren Human Service Center. It works to empower organizations that provide humanitarian services, especially in areas of women’s rights, poverty reduction, child welfare, environmental protection, fighting HIV/AIDS and assisting the disabled.

A number of challenges need to be met for civil society organizations to participate effectively in China’s development agenda:

- More favourable legislation on civil society organizations
- More effective channels for civil society organizations to communicate with legislators and Government officials
- Greater recognition by Government and general public of the positive contribution of CSOs
- Strengthened capacity of civil society organizations to conduct dialogue with the Government and the public.

“Be There and Be Heard” aims to address all those challenges, so as to help civil society organizations become effectively engaged in the legislation and policy-making process; to demonstrate to the public and communicate to the Government their positive role in society; and to highlight their need for enabling legislation and for improved capacity to communicate with the Government and the public.



Media for dialogue in Sierra Leone



Although Sierra Leone held successful elections in 2007, its democracy is still stabilizing. Long-term challenges such as poverty, corruption and human rights violations continue to impede and slow governance efforts. UNDEF supports a timely initiative by Journalists for Human Rights to strengthen local media and thereby facilitate a national dialogue between civil society, citizens and Government.

The innovative project includes monthly community forums bringing together journalists, civil society representatives and Government officials. These discuss concrete ways the local media can address and facilitate dialogue on specific local issues related to democracy and governance. Topics range from “The Public Role in the Development of Community Media” to “The Role of Editors in Shaping Content.” After each Forum, participants are asked for suggestions for future topics, allowing the stakeholders to shape the programming. On completing one Forum, 96 per cent of participants said they had a greater understanding of the role of the media in democratic development.

Analyser, comprendre et relever les défis de l’alternance démocratique en Afrique



Le FNUD a soutenu une conférence sur «Les défis de l’alternance démocratique en Afrique» tenue en février dernier à Cotonou organisée par l’Institut des droits de l’Homme et de promotion de la démocratie. Cette conférence a rassemblé représentants de la société civile et des gouvernements de différents pays africains qui se sont penchés sur les défis et les résistances à l’alternance démocratique en Afrique.

Depuis le début des années 2000, on constate dans de nombreux pays africains l’absence d’alternance démocratique. Face à ce constat, cette conférence avait pour but d’offrir un espace de dialogue afin d’identifier et analyser les motifs et les formes de résistance à l’alternance démocratique, tenter d’élaborer une série

de recommandations pour remédier à ces formes de résistances et définir les modalités d’un mécanisme de suivi de ces recommandations.

Les débats ont mis en exergue le fait que la problématique de l’alternance démocratique et les défis qui s’y rattachent se situent à différents niveaux: depuis l’organisation des élections au statut et mandat du Chef de l’Etat, des garanties constitutionnelles de l’alternance au rôle de l’opposition. Un certain nombre de facteurs, tels que la nécessité d’un pluralisme politique et la confiance dans les processus électoraux, ont été soulignés comme autant de pré-requis favorisant l’alternance démocratique mais aussi le rôle clef que la société civile doit jouer dans ce processus. Les débats ont été riches et ont permis d’identifier un certain nombre de pistes de réflexion et de recommandations qui sont disponibles sur le [site internet de l’IDH](#).

WORTH READING



Opening doors for African democracy

The Institute for Democracy in South Africa has issued a landmark publication, with UNDEF support, entitled [Democracy in Africa: Promoting the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#). It spells out that

“the pressure for the recognition of human rights in Africa is far greater than it has ever been and the prospects for democratic breakthroughs are greater than ever”.

UNDEF and the new United States global security strategy

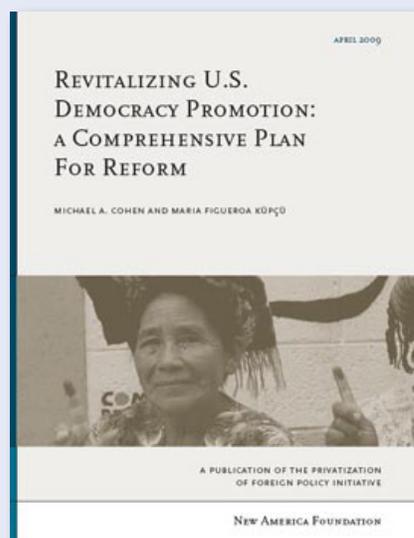


The Center for Strategic and International Studies, in its recent publication, [Democracy in U.S. Security Strategy: From Promotion to Support](#), takes a comprehensive look at the latest U.S. thinking. It includes an article by Larry Diamond, Supporting Democracy: Refashioning U.S. Global Strategy, which states:



“We should also continue to support and encourage **broader financial support for the UN Democracy Fund**, which has raised \$90 million so far for grants to support the development of democratic institutions and practices, including civil society. Beyond the tangible assistance, the symbolism of having the UN work explicitly on behalf of democracy is vitally important.”

Revitalizing US democracy support



The New America Foundation takes an approach similar CSIS in [Revitalizing U.S. Democracy Promotion: A Comprehensive Plan for Reform](#). The report lays out six steps for revitalizing US efforts and reforming the US foreign assistance bureaucracy. Among these, it recommends that

“other avenues should be sought to increase assistance to non-state actors. This should include expanded U.S. support for multi-lateral and regional organizations, **including the United Nations Democracy Fund.**”

History of UNDEF as a new actor



UNDEF’s Executive Head, Roland Rich, explains the story so far in an [interview with the World Federation of United Nations Associations](#).

Senior Adviser and Editor:
Annika Savill, savill@un.org

UNDEF Online Volunteer and Designer:
Shelley Johnstone, shelley@projectnumberfour.com

UNDEF Intern:
Lea Kaspar, lea.kaspar@gmail.com