UNDEF Update - February 2013

INSIDE UNDEF

MORE THAN 3,000 PROJECT PROPOSALS

UNDEF received 3,014 project proposals for its Seventh Round of Funding by the deadline of New Year’s Eve 2012 – the second highest number in the history of the Fund. The project proposals originated from applicants in 133 countries, the vast majority local civil society organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The proposals are now being assessed by independent consultants, a process in which each proposal will be judged on its inherent quality and scored against 10 set criteria:

- Does the proposed project advance the objectives of UNDEF?
- Does the applicant organization have a strong track record?
- Is the proposal technically sound in conception and presentation?
- Does the proposal make use of the UN’s and UNDEF’s comparative advantage?
- Would the proposed project have significant impact?
- Would the proposed project represent good value for money?
- Does the proposed project have strong prospects for successful implementation?
- Does the proposed project have strong prospects of sustainability beyond the project duration?
- Does the proposed project encourage inclusiveness?
- Would the proposed project enhance gender equality?

Because of the large number of proposals, the assessment process will be highly rigorous and competitive. In the following stage, a long list will be reviewed by the UNDEF Programme Consultative Group – comprising 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, UN Women and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. This will result in a short list to be reviewed by the UNDEF Advisory Board and ultimately submitted to the Secretary-General for approval.

Given the large volume of proposals, only applicants who advance to the short list will be contacted by UNDEF. This is expected to be in mid-2013, when short-listed applicants will be asked to compose a draft project document to be negotiated with UNDEF – the final stage of the selection process.

In its first six Rounds of Funding, UNDEF has supported more than 450 projects in over 150 countries. They all reflect a focus on strengthening the voice of civil society, ranging from exchanging electoral best practices and empowering marginalized communities to conducting training in new media and establishing grassroots schools for democracy.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGHLIGHTS

UNDEF’S WORK TO ADVANCE UN DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The UN General Assembly adopted a new resolution on education for democracy. It recalled “with appreciation the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund and the efforts of the Fund to advance the United Nations democracy agenda”. The resolution strongly encouraged Member States to integrate education for democracy, along with civic education and human rights education, into national education standards.

Introducing the text, Mongolia’s representative, citing the Secretary-General, said that developing a culture of democracy and fostering global citizenship are becoming two of the pressing priorities for the international community.
“Education for Democracy: Learning Together” was the title of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of the Community of Democracies held in New Delhi on 17-18 January 2013. The event was hosted by India’s Ministry of External Affairs together with the Foreign Ministry of Mongolia, current Chair of the Community of Democracies. The conference brought together government representatives and education experts from a range of Asia-Pacific countries. The topic of the conference dovetailed with a global UNDEF-funded democracy education project being implemented by the Council for the Community of Democracies, the civil society arm of the intergovernmental grouping. UNDEF was represented at the Delhi conference by Executive Head Roland Rich, who delivered an address under the agenda item “Beyond Schools: Multiple approaches to education for democracy”. Mr. Rich summed up three policy prescriptions for democracy education as openness, participation and quality.

International IDEA, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, held its annual conference in Canberra on 26-27 November 2012 under the heading “Beyond Elites: People Power, Popular Participation and the Integrity of Democratic Institutions”. The meeting featured a keynote address by Ashraf Ghani, former Finance Minister of Afghanistan who was a Presidential candidate in the 2009 elections, and who also served as a member of the UNDEF Advisory Board. Mr. Ghani drew on his leadership experience in Afghanistan to highlight the need to build grass roots support for democratization. UNDEF Executive Head Roland Rich participated in a panel on “Moving from Authoritarian Rule to Participatory Democracy – Challenges and Lessons Learned”. He drew on the work of another former UNDEF Advisory Board member, the late Guillermo O’Donnell, to warn against a one-size-fits-all transition paradigm and the temptation to impose a standard model of design and sequencing on transition countries. The process of discussion and decision-making must nurture and involve civil society - the organised non-commercial segment of the nation between the government and the family. Strengthening civil society was the means of building a nation from the bottom up.
BUILDING CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE TO TRAIN WOMEN IN LIBYA

UNDEF finances a new project for a centre of excellence to mainstream Libyan women in politics and develop a nationwide civic education strategy. The centre will train women in democratic processes and institutions, gender, leadership and interpersonal skills. Once the project completes its pilot phase, it will present the Libyan government with a plan to introduce the training across the country as a whole. The project is implemented by the Libyan Women Forum, with an overall objective to help secure an influential role for women in decision-making and democratization, and enable them to play an effective role in the development of Libya. The Center will act as a meeting place and hub for training and mentoring women from the country as a whole.

EXPANDING PUBLIC POLICY DIALOGUE IN NORTH AFRICA

UNDEF funds a new project in Libya, Morocco and Tunisia to engage youth and civil society in public policy dialogue. It works through more than 200 local public policy programmes, training trainers and producing learning materials under the Project Citizen curriculum, developed in a successful earlier UNDEF-funded project in Morocco. The curriculum helps youth and civil society groups analyze public policy analysis and hold informed policy dialogue with decision-makers and community leaders. Local, national and regional conferences will be held to showcase the best public policy proposals. The initiative, implemented by the Moroccan Center for Civic Education, will create a regional network of policy advocates, and use social media tools to share information and project ideas throughout North Africa. The project’s opening ceremony in Rabat featured a keynote speech by El Habib Choubani, Morocco’s Minister for Civil Society and Parliamentary Relations, It was carried by Morocco’s national television channel.
Former slaves and their descendants -- in particular women -- remain victims of severe discrimination in Mauritania. Hampered by illiteracy and poverty, they are excluded from political processes, unaware of their human rights, and subject to electoral manipulation. UNDEF funds a project to advance their political participation, strengthen their decision-making skills and build political dialogue. In November 2012, the project held training sessions in the province of Medbougou on organizational and leadership skills, social mobilization and advocacy. Ultimately, the initiative will also contribute to inter-communal conflict resolution in the Wilaya region of Hodh El Gharbi.

Efforts for democratization and development in Kyrgyzstan continue to be hampered by political and administrative corruption that limits access to public goods and services. Vulnerable groups are excluded from access to land, water, shelter, sanitation, clothing, healthcare and education, as well as from participation in decisions that affect their lives. UNDEF funds a project implemented by Transparency International Kyrgyzstan to bridge the gap between public demand and the responsiveness of local authorities and public representatives. Through Development Pacts with local communities, the initiative creates incentives for public office-holders to deliver public services more effectively and transparently, strengthens the capacity of local communities and civil society to use democratic spaces for public decision-making, and works for higher benchmarks in accountability and integrity of local authorities. It brings together committed local leaders and communities around locally identified development challenges and priorities to build public consensus. Communities start with small projects that they can fund by themselves, or where they can provide their labor. Successful micro-projects become examples to bring to the attention of regional and state authorities when seeking funding for bigger local enterprises.

UNDEF Programme Officer Christian Lamarre (pictured above, centre) visited one of the micro-projects in December 2012 -- the ongoing work to repair a bridge in the village of Kuu Maidan that was destroyed by seasonal floods.

Building better public access in Kyrgyzstan

Advancing the rights of former slaves in Mauritania
WORTH READING: UNDEF in the News

PAKISTAN YOUTH: ‘OVERCOME FEAR INGRAINED BY PREVIOUS GENERATIONS’

Some 200 delegates gathered for a nationwide symposium in Lahore held by the Youth Parliament of Pakistan as part of an UNDEF-funded project. The event was covered prominently in The Express Tribune. Participants included students, politicians, journalists and social activists. Young people need to overcome the fear of the system ingrained by previous generations,” said Talha Chishti, deputy director of the Citizens’ Commission for Human Development. “Give democracy time. We must realise it is the best form of governance.” Jehaan Pakistan published a large spread on the event (pictured).

INTERNATIONAL GATHERING IN KATHMANDU FOR RIGHTS OF WIDOWS

An international conference in Kathmandu for widows’ empowerment was covered by the Himalayan Times and República. Part of an UNDEF-funded project implemented by the South Asian Network for Widows’ Empowerment in Development, the gathering called for efforts to end discriminatory policies impacting single women, including a UN Resolution protecting the rights of widows. Nepal’s Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare, Dan Bahadur Chaudhary, told the conference that his ministry was preparing a blueprint for an emergency fund to help women in vulnerable state, according to a separate article in the Himalayan Times. Vice-President Parmananda Jha said the government should work for ensuring the rights of the single women by ending the negative perception and mindset, adding: “Instead of showing sympathy towards the state should work for providing training, education, employment and skill oriented programmes for elevating the living standard of the single women, said Jha.

NEW PROJECT FOR BETTER ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN TIMOR-LESTE

The East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin featured a new UNDEF-funded project that promotes access to justice by building skills to deal with courts, parliament, laws and legislative process. The project, implemented by the Judicial System Monitoring Program, will support a Legal Research Unit and Parliament Watch Program to monitor the courts and the National Parliament.
A NEW OBSERVATORY FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS IN

TUNISIA

Le Temps featured an UNDEF-financed project to create an observatory for Tunisian women’s rights as a watchdog of democracy and social justice. The overall goal is to develop specific tools for detection of political discrimination and economic, social and cultural attitudes, and to promote concrete actions for equal opportunities. It includes a sector inquiry on the status of implementation of legislation, outreach to women about their rights, and support groups for women to find a job. The project is implemented by the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates.

MUSICIENS RAPPEURS MOBILISENT LES ÉLECTEURS AU CAMEROUN

Face au très faible taux d’inscription sur les listes électorales dans la région de l’Adamaoua, de nombreux artistes musiciens ont été mobilisé afin de chanter le bien fondé du processus d’enregistrement électoral, selon La Nouvelle Expression. L’effort fait partie du projet d’Éducation au Droit Électoral et Accompagnement des Citoyens dans les Processus Électoraux au Cameroun, mis en œuvre par UN Monde Avenir et financé par le FNUD.

HAÏTI
SÉISME: DÉBAT OUVERT SUR LA RECONSTRUCTION

À l’occasion du troisième anniversaire du séisme qui avait dévasté plusieurs communes de Haïti, une conférence commémorative s’est tenue au cours d’un projet financé par le FNUD, selon Haïti Press Network. Le débat, à Petite Rivière de l’Artibonite, a abordé les dimensions politiques, économiques, judiciaires et culturelles de la reconstruction du pays. « Haïti doit être un pays de débats et non de combats », a souhaité un intervenant. Le projet est mis en œuvre par l’Association des Parents et Professeurs d’Ecoles de Liancourt.

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