

INSIDE UNDEF

UNDEF's new Advisory Board approves over 50 additional projects

UNDEF's reconstituted Advisory Board held its first meeting of 2016 on 17 May and endorsed a short list of 53 two-year projects totalling 11 million dollars. This will bring to more than 650 the number of projects funded and supported by UNDEF since its inception 10 years ago. Once the short list is approved by the UN Secretary-General, 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.

UNDEF is also required to notify the Government of each country where a project is recommended. For this Tenth Round of Funding, UNDEF received 2,664 project proposals from organizations in 136 countries, the vast majority local NGOs. The short list is the product of a thorough and rigorous process. A team of eight assessors from around the world— combining more than 100 years of programme and project experience -- scored each proposal against 10 set criteria and produced a long list of some 250 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 in with existing work in the countries and fields proposed. The same comments were sought from the UNDEF Programme Consultative Group, making use of the 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.



Governments on the Board comprise the seven largest contributors to UNDEF during 2013-2015: United States of America, Sweden, Germany, India, Australia, Poland, Japan; and six countries reflecting geographical diversity: Algeria, Barbados, Colombia, Nigeria, Slovakia, Sri Lanka. The Tenth Round of Funding comes amid a range of acute challenges worldwide, including an unprecedented refugee crisis, rising extremism and growing restrictions against civil society in alarming number of countries. "I want to

sound a call to protect the space needed by civil society," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said recently. "Confident nations are those that see civil society as an indispensable partner in working for the betterment of society. In places where support from individual Governments may be difficult, the United Nations – including the UN Democracy Fund – stands ready as an objective source of funding without the baggage of politics and history."

UNDEF 'has proven itself to be effective, respected and legitimate in parts of the world where it's very difficult for others to operate'



Thomas Carothers, one of the world's leading scholars on democracy support, gave a **lecture** at the United Nations on the theme of "Democracy's Uncertain State". Vice-President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Professor Carothers addressed the challenges in every region while giving the inaugural Margaret Vogt Memorial Lecture on 5 May 2016, in commemoration of the late Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Central African Republic.

He highlighted UNDEF's role in addressing these challenges: "The United Nations role in international democracy support is much wider, much broader and much more important than many observers of this community realize... We have the United Nations Democracy Fund, which when it was started a little more than 10 years ago, many people had questions about, but has proven itself to be effective, respected and legitimate in parts of the world where it's very difficult for others to operate." The segment on UNDEF is [here](#).

Bolstering women's political representation in Sri Lanka



UNDEF is now in its second year of partnership with the **International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism** – Asia Committee, to implement the Right to Women's Political Representation in Sri Lanka project. As part of this project, IMADR-AC has conducted a series of capacity building and awareness raising programmes for political parties on democracy, human, women and minority rights in line with international normative frameworks. These types of initiatives are important in Sri Lanka given its poor records of women's political representation, one of the lowest in Asia. The recent programme was held in the Kurunegala district targeting 25 local women political representatives and aspirants, including the

Governor of the North Western Province. Leadership and advocacy skills development were at the forefront along with discussion sessions on the newly passed Law on Local Government looking at the nature, context and possible challenges. The main conclusion reached by the participants was that they as female local political representatives and political aspirants are challenged by the new law in terms of capacity, resources, and a continued patriarchal mindset in society which puts them in a less favourable situation when it comes to winning elections. Hence, they are tasked with improving their capacity, resource base, and societal support for greater empowerment and success in politics.

Rural media development to promote democracy and human rights in Bangladesh

The ninth media training workshop for CSO representatives took place early April in the district of Sylhet under the UNDEF-funded project, Rural Media Development for Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Bangladesh, implemented by **News Network**. The project aims to strengthen democracy and human rights in social life through media development in rural areas by developing the professional skills of rural journalists, editors and CSO staff to defend and promote democracy and human rights issues.

The four day media training course focused both on the international human rights framework and provided targeted content on ethical

reporting, codes of conduct, techniques for gathering and investigating information. Participants worked in groups to identify possible rights-based issues affecting local people, such as forced marriage, child labour, trafficking and violence against women, access to healthcare, education and justice, shortage of pure drinking water and public service deliveries. They then went on field visits to collect information to write up their media reports, which were discussed with the trainers the following day and later to be published. Parallel training is also being conducted for journalists and interaction events between both groups are being organised to enhance information sharing and network building.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Promotion of women empowerment and rights

The existence of gender gaps in Somalia has denied women the opportunity to participate actively in the social, economic and political development of the country. Over the past two years the **Centre of Education and Development** has been implementing the UNDEF-funded POWER project in the Banadir district Mogadishu. The main objective of the project was to strengthen women's leadership, advocacy, lobbying and governance skills and to enhance their participation in social, economic and political activities. The project aimed to reduce gender based discrimination and help women to find a safer space against vulnerability to violence and conflict.

The POWER project has been promoting the empowerment of women through adoption of different strategies, including a small grant programme. Small grants were given to 10 women groups to support projects which would contribute to the social, economic and political empowerment through workshops and skill trainings for peer women in line with the core functions of the CSO. The expectation was that women participants would acquire the knowledge and skills for advocacy and media campaign strategies and identify key gender related issues.

An internal survey by CED affirmed that the empowering strategy has borne positive results, with target women became aware and sensitized.



Consolidating democratic practice among women and youth in Sierra Leone

After overcoming the Ebola outbreak, Sierra Leone continues to work towards consolidating democratic practice. UNDEF is funding a project implemented by the NGO **Dignity Now** to contribute towards this through civic education of women and youth. This project has initiated a number of innovative activities to increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of democratic governance and human rights concepts and practices among the target communities. Focus group discussions and training workshops have been key activities proven to be highly effective in challenging deep-rooted harmful traditional practices, and belief systems that perpetuate bad governance, harmful traditional practices, systems of abuse and vulnerability. These activities also provide a platform for communities to voice their opinions, ask questions and seek clarifications on governance and rights issues and disseminate knowledge. Dignity Now is also working in tracking and identifying human rights

violations and abuse through a multi-stakeholder approach whereby the communities themselves brainstorm on the human rights situation in their communities and further identify and prioritize them. Direct psychosocial and logistical support and response to sexual and gender based violence that has been reported within the target communities has been provided. Within this framework, over 230 cases have been identified, processed and referred, 116 cases of which are now in the courts. Dignity Now is providing logistical support in the form of financial support for survivors of violence to take medical certificates, transportation to and from police and court and on a number of occasion feeding and lodging as and when deemed necessary. Regular follow-ups have been conducted to ensure that survivors are provided with timely and adequate support in response to their situation.



NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Ensuring citizen's participation for a better Jamaica



As part of the UNDEF-funded project, the NGO **Jamaicans for Justice** is producing and airing the radio talkshow entitled "The Community Lawyer". Broadcasts aim to inform the public about their general human rights and how they can secure and protect those rights – all done by reducing complex legal issues into simple accessible language. Topics have ranged from "Your Health, Your Responsibility, Your Rights on Arrest, Detention & Bail, to Your Environment and You: What are your rights?" The most recent radio show

focused on citizens arrest and private action, providing engaging discussions on community leadership and the role of leaders in mediation, dispute resolution and mentoring led by a Justice of the Peace and community leader. The project is also providing a series of community and leadership workshops providing basic education on human rights, justice, governance, stigma and discrimination, information on how to access social services, and legitimately participate in community and national level

Youth Web TV: an alternative way to news making in Morocco

A new project funded by the UN Democracy Fund has kicked off in Morocco, Youth Web TV, implemented by **Médiateur pour la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (MDDH)** located in Rabat aims at greater democratization of public media by opening up access to young people in a backdrop marked by their use of new technologies for communication and political participation. The project aims at capacity building of the youth through their involvement in the design, development and implementation of television programmes addressing various topics related to current political, economic, social and cultural issues. This project builds on a previous UNDEF funded project "Jeunes pour la démocratie au Maroc" that brought together

students in a youth council providing Moroccan youth an exchange platform to debate and express their opinions. The project Youth web TV sustains the outcomes of this first initiative and reinforces the involvement of the youth in the public space by creating a bridge that will strengthen the technical and artistic skills of the youth normally confined to the alternative media. This will be done by involving a group of young men and women in producing web TV content such as podcasts and publicity advocacy spots and also in creating a sustainable Web TV program that will offer an alternative to traditional media content. One of the first initiatives of the project - the project teaser - is now online and can be accessed [here](#).



Fourth annual Athens forum with UNDEF on International Day of Democracy

To mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, the **Athens Democracy Forum** 2016 will be held for the fourth year by the International New York Times in cooperation with the UN Democracy Fund. This year's programme, expanded to five days, will include discussions at the Acropolis Museum, the Zappeion, the Megaron Conference Centre. Costa Navarino and the Ancient Agora of Athens -- the birthplace of democracy. Speakers will include Prokopios Pavlopoulos, President of Greece; Giorgis Kaminis, Mayor of Athens; Geoffrey Robertson QC; Mario Monti, former Prime Minister of Italy; Paul

Krugman and Roger Cohen of the New York Times; and Annika Savill, Executive Head of the UN Democracy Fund. Themes will include migration; privacy versus security; democracy and religion; democracy and architecture; as well as democracy and business. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a message of support to the Forum: "Let me commend you for coming together again in the birthplace of democracy to observe this International Day, in cooperation with the United Nations Democracy Fund... On this International Day of Democracy, I look to you to give life to our shared mission."

