

UNDEF Board

approves almost 50 new two-year projects

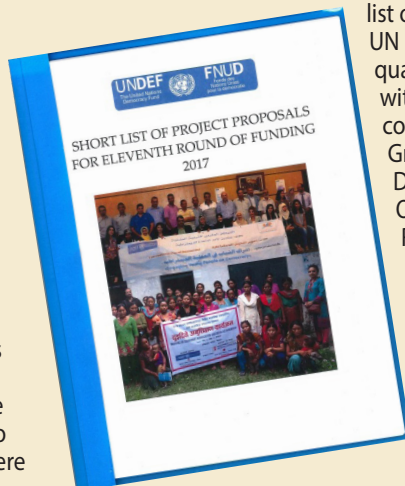
UNDEF's Advisory Board met on 27 April 2017 and endorsed a short list of 49 two-year projects totalling almost 10 million dollars. This will bring to more than 700 the number of projects funded and supported by UNDEF since its inception 12 years ago.

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 11 Round of Funding, UNDEF received 3,002 project proposals - the highest number in six years - from organizations in 153 countries, the vast majority local NGOs.

This Round comes amid a range of acute challenges worldwide, including rising extremism, the ongoing refugee crisis, and growing restrictions against civil society in an alarming number of countries. For the first time, UNDEF's Advisory Board agreed a designated theme for the call for proposals: inclusion, diversity and pluralism.

The short list is the product of a thorough and rigorous process. A team of nine 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 300 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.

Based on this collective input, the UNDEF Secretariat produced the attached recommendation of 49 project proposals. Of the project proposals:

- 25 per cent are in Africa,
- 25 per cent in Asia,
- 18 per cent in the Arab States,
- 16 per cent in Europe,
- 16 per cent in Latin America.



Broken down by main project focus, 27 per cent of the project proposals are in women's empowerment; 23 per cent in strengthening interaction with government; 18 per cent in rule of law and human rights; 16 per cent of project proposals are in youth engagement – including working with young people against extremism; 6 per cent are in media and freedom of expression; 6 per cent in community activism; and 4 per cent in tools for knowledge.

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.

Lessons learned: UNDEF launches interactive platform distilling more than 10 years' good practice in civil society projects



A resource made possible by a grant from the UK Government

Drawing on lessons learned from over 10 years of funding civil society projects, UNDEF has developed an interactive resource to help civil society organizations and donors design more effective projects. This new UNDEF resource is made possible by financial support of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Magna Carta Fund.

The UNDEF Lessons Learned website <https://www.undeflessonslearned.org/> distills key lessons from democracy and human rights projects and makes them easily accessible, for civil society organizations, Governments and other donors, scholars and other stakeholders involved in the funding and implementation of initiatives promoting human rights and democracy.

The resource allows users to search for valuable insights across different projects using tags so that users can make links between and across projects for example to find tips on what makes training successful.



The site also includes of many valuable lessons related to project management, for example on the importance of baseline surveys or common problems with managing staff.

The innovative tagging feature also allows for users to create new knowledge across projects. For example, radio has proven a remarkably resilient technology, in particular in reaching marginal groups.



Feedback from users on what has been useful and what might be of interest is encouraged.

The lessons learned resource will be updated with new materials from evaluations and other relevant learning.

The platform has been presented to civil society organizations at pre-launch events in New York, Geneva and Brussels, and will be shared widely by UNDEF programme officers on project missions to programme countries.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Democratic and economic empowerment of vulnerable youth to prevent extremism in Tunisia

An UNDEF-funded project in Tunisia aims to include and economically empower vulnerable youth in the northeastern governorates of Beja, Jendouba, Kef and Siliana.

Implemented by local civil society organization Tamkeen For Development, the project skillfully links economic empowerment and political participation for youth at risk in poverty-prone areas of the country.

The project aims to better integrate youth in the country's public life and to help them contribute to the ongoing political transition by giving them skills to contribute in their regions' economic and political life, with an eye on upcoming municipal elections planned for 17 December 2017, the first such elections to be held since Tunisia's 2011 uprising.

A group of young men and women gain valuable skills and knowledge through the project's economic inclusion scheme, with the underlying principle that once youth are given the opportunity to become economically independent, they will gradually gain the confidence to proactively engage in civic and political life.

At a press conference in Tunis on 13 April 2017 to officially launch the project, UNDEF's Executive Head Annika Savill highlighted the pioneering nature of the project to advance democracy and economic development hand in hand, adding that UNDEF had encouraged the creation of the project from the outset. Watch her video message [here](#).

The project will select 1,200 youths -- 300 from each of the four governorates -- for training in soft skills, project management, participative democracy, entrepreneurship. Of these, 200 youths will receive additional technical training in cattle breeding, after which they will be given financial support and market opportunities to launch their own income generating activity. In another innovative approach, the project will be managed through a youth-led steering committee, allowing them to exercise leadership and launch public initiatives where they can put into practice the foundations of democracy.



Enhancing freedom of speech in the Gambia

In a recently launched UNDEF project, the [Gambia Press Union](#) will work with national and international partners to complement the efforts of the government to promote an enabling environment for freedom of speech and responsible and investigative journalism in the Gambia. The GPU has for many years worked to improve professionalism among Gambian journalists, and runs the country's first school of journalism.

The UNDEF funded project titled "*Enhancing Government-Media Relations to Improve the Legal Environment for Freedom of Expression in The Gambia*" will engage in consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including media, lawyers, students, youth, security forces, National Assembly, judiciary, government agencies and civil society. This will lead to the establishment of the National Freedom of Expression Committee that will work towards a comprehensive review of existing freedom of expressions and advocate for the introduction of laws that are conducive to freedom of speech. The project also aims to produce an annual state of freedom of expression report. Furthermore, the GPU will set up an independent media self-regulatory mechanism to monitor compliance and enforce the code of conduct while serving as a platform for the public to lodge complaints against media infringements on the rights and freedom of the members of the public.



#DZ017 #GambiaPressUnion #UNDEF #EUinTheGambia

#WFPD2017 #GambiaPressUnion #UNDEF #EUinTheGambia #JIBSCO

Community engagement for safer schools in Nigeria



Illustration photo: Human Rights Watch/Bede Sheppard

In Nigeria, thousands struggle to access to education due to the threat of violence. Especially in the northeast region of the country, terrorist group Boko Haram poses a serious threat to safe learning environments as it is recently reported to have destroyed a total of 1500 schools in the area. Founding Director of [Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre](#) Dr Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi says that 400,000 children, especially girls, have been forced to end their education due to safety concerns.

The UNDEF funded project "*Promoting dialogue within communities for security and safety of schools in Nigeria*" promotes safer schools. WARDC aims to strengthen the voice of civil society in the states of Bauchi, Borno, Kaduna and the Federal Capital Territory to engage the the education sector and develop an agenda for safe schools in Nigeria. Through a participatory approach it will build capacity of schools including through designing and establishing an early warning system and the adoption of minimum standards/guidelines, a plan of action for safe and secure schools and implementing the safer school initiative in the target states.

Enhancing Youth Participation in Peacebuilding and Democracy in Yemen

An UNDEF-funded project has just begun in war-torn Yemen to assist peacebuilding and promote democracy by empowering youth to participate more in civic life.

This project addresses challenges posed by ethnic and religious tensions. Implemented by the [Khadija Foundation for Development](#), the project aims to build youth capacity by involving them in advocacy campaigns and raise civic awareness by creating youth networks. The goal is to engage youth on how to build peace beyond the life of the project.

During the project's launch event in Ibb Governorate on February 5, 2017 (pictured), President of the Khadija Foundation Roma Al Damasi



highlighted the important role Yemeni youth initiatives can play in strengthening peacebuilding since youth tend to be less entrenched in old ways of thinking and have more flexibility in reaching out to the local communities. He underscored that young people need to understand the sources of conflict and take an active role as agents in peace dialogues.

The project will train 300 youth initiative members in three governorates of Sana'a, Ibb and Dhamar. The members will work through the established youth network, Youth Pledge 4 Peace, to develop a vision that will be adopted in the nation's peacebuilding agenda.

Supporting the rights of migrants in Chinese cities



The National Bureau of Statistics of China estimates that since 2000, urban areas have experienced a population increase of twenty percent. Millions of people from the Chinese countryside move to larger cities in search of a better life. Such a move can involve many obstacles that can be hard for rural newcomers to overcome. Migrants' limited knowledge of their legal rights and a shortage of legal aid resources can make it difficult for migrant workers.

Against this background, UNDEF has granted almost a quarter of a million dollars over a two-year period to the project "*Capacity Building to Promote Rights Protection for Migrant Workers in China*". The project grantee, [Beijing Zhicheng Migrant Workers Legal Aid and Research Center](#), offers professional legal aid to migrant workers. Since its

establishment in 2005, its legal experts have consulted over 200 000 migrants, and handled more than 10 000 cases.

The UNDEF grant will enable Zhicheng to undertake more consultations, case representations and training in order to increase access to justice for migrant workers, establish a network of professional lawyers in the country, and promote public advocacy to call on more equal and favourable legal environment for migrant workers. Since the project started in January 2017, around 30 cases have been taken on by lawyers and 450 consultations have been provided. A handbook on laws and rights protection skills is under production, and some migrants have already received training in worker's rights.



Strengthening an independent Syrian media

An UNDEF-funded project recently launched a two-year pilot working with exiled Syrian journalists foster inclusive and informed public dialogue on human rights, while countering hate speech.

Implemented by [Journalists for Human Rights](#), the project will strengthen free media outlets, widen the public debate on human rights and governance, and build skills of Syrian journalists based in Turkey to produce unbiased and accurate news stories, including training in data journalism tools and new technology. The project will also work with media managers to help build sustainable business plans so they can work independently and financially sustain quality journalism in Syria and for their diaspora - long after the current conflict has ended.

“These journalists are courageous and undeterred” said Journalists for Human Rights Executive Director Rachel Pulfer, “even after all they have seen and lived with, to continue reporting on human rights stories in Syria.” Journalists for Human Rights programme manager Zein Almoghraby said “the media sector in Syria is fragmented, and severely constrained in its capacity. Most outlets exist at the whim of international financing, with few long term strategies in place to sustain their work.”

The project works with the Syrian Network of Print Media, media alliance that includes seven independent Syrian newspapers and magazines.



Civil society insights from Latin America



UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill met in March 2017 with [TECHO's](#) Miami team to discuss priorities for civil society empowerment in Latin America. A youth-led non-profit organization that works to empower slum-dwellers, TECHO focuses on collaborative work between families living in poverty and youth volunteers. It serves as a member of UNDEF's Advisory Board, which groups member states, civil society organizations and individuals so as to offer the UN Secretary-General advice on proposals for funding and project focus priorities.

Since its creation 20 years ago, TECHO has mobilized over 800,000 volunteers, built over 6000 permanent houses across 19 Latin American countries, received numerous awards, and is today a much respected organization in the international development community.