

Window for new project proposals opens on 15 November



Project proposals are subject to a highly rigorous and competitive selection process, quality vetting, due diligence and lessons learned from previous Rounds. A team of international assessors score each proposal against 10 set criteria and produce a long list. To narrow down the list further, UN Resident Coordinators and Experts of the UNDEF Advisory Board are 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 are 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 produces a first short list, expected to be completed only in mid-2013, after which the process moves into the next stage. Each short-listed applicant will be contacted with a request for a draft project document, which is in effect the contract between UNDEF and the grantee. The project document negotiation requires the applicant to provide a more elaborated project design, and involves detailed input from both UNDEF and the applicant, as well as scrutiny and due diligence enquiries by UNDEF. Only upon successful conclusion of the project document, and its approval by the United Nations Controller, will the project proposal formally be approved for funds disbursement – usually after September.

UNDEF opens its annual window for project proposals for its Eighth Round of Funding on 15 November 2013, following the green light given by the UNDEF Advisory Board on 7 November (pictured). Project proposals may be submitted on-line between 15 November and 31 December at www.un.org/democracyfund. Only on-line proposals in either English or French will be accepted. Applicants can find guidelines, lessons learned, and examples of previous application forms [here](#). Those who plan to submit a proposal are strongly encouraged to visit this page as soon as possible to familiarize themselves with what is required.

UNDEF supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. It is the only UN entity that has the word “democracy” in its name; the only UN body with the primary purpose of supporting democracy through empowering civil society; and one of the youngest entities in the UN system. UNDEF projects exist in developing countries, in societies in transition and in challenging environments, and are in six main areas: Community development; rule of law and human rights; tools for democratization; youth; empowering women; and media. UNDEF grants range from US\$50,000 to US\$400,000. So far, UNDEF has funded more than 400 projects in over 100 countries, bringing total disbursement to almost 140 million dollars. The large majority of funds go to local civil society groups. In this way, UNDEF plays a new and unique role, complementing the UN’s traditional work with Governments to strengthen democratic governance around the world. It targets the demand side of democracy, rather than the supply side. In 2012, UNDEF received over 3000 project proposals. Only some 50 were selected for funding.





Calling all future applicants: lessons learned

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Dear civil society organization applicants,

The following is feedback compiled on the basis of applications from UNDEF rounds. It provides useful pointers for you to bear in mind as you prepare for your application.

Presentation

The higher the quality of the presentation, the higher your application will score. You can get an idea of what is required by viewing an [application form](#), and by reading [project proposal guidelines](#). Fill in all the information that is relevant, but do not exceed the character limits in the application form. Ensure that the information is accurate. Write in plain English or French, avoiding jargon where possible. Use correct acronyms and website addresses. Write succinct sentences and avoid repetition.

Clarity

Clarity is the key to a successful application. The applicant must have a clear idea about what they want to achieve and a clear strategy for how to achieve it. You need to spell out the link between your overall vision and your activities and outputs -- how these will translate your vision into reality. Lack of clarity cannot be disguised by the use of "buzz" words or other formulaic constructions; a successful design requires a logic that can be followed step by step. Brainstorm the ideas thoroughly before writing them down, but equally, agree on what specific steps are needed to make them happen, and in what sequence. Play the "devil's advocate" and criticise the initial ideas until you have achieved a logical design.

Scoring and criteria

In UNDEF's initial assessment of applications, each project proposal is scored against 10 criteria. Since only three proposals out of 100 make it to the short-list, you need to score well on all the criteria to advance to the next stage. Make sure you demonstrate that your proposal satisfies each one:

- ♣ Does the applicant organization have a strong track record?
- ♣ Is the proposal technically sound in conception and presentation?

How would the proposed project:

- ♣ Promote the objectives of UNDEF?
- ♣ Make use of the UN's and UNDEF's comparative advantage?
- ♣ Have significant impact?
- ♣ Represent good value for money?
- ♣ Have strong prospects for successful implementation?
- ♣ Have strong prospects of sustainability beyond the project duration?
- ♣ Encourage inclusiveness?
- ♣ Enhance gender equality?

Innovation

How can your application stand out from the others? The answer is innovation. That means a new idea, a new method or an original proposal. If the outputs of the project are simply more workshops to raise awareness, then your application is unlikely to distinguish itself. When you think of innovative approaches, ensure that the proposal is action-oriented, with concrete outputs 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, in turn, will strengthen democratic processes. The more direct the link, the stronger the application.

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 other items as a back door method to obtain more salary. Also be aware that UNDEF rarely funds the purchase of vehicles.

Value for Money

Many applications have 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; in more than 300 projects implemented to date, only one project has received this amount. The average grant is around \$250,000. An application requesting \$499,000, but delivering the same outputs as a similar application asking for \$350,000, will score low on value for money. 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.

Timing

The activities in the project proposal should not begin until late 2012 or preferably 2013. Please do not leave submission of the proposal until the last few days. Given that the application window is open for six weeks, a well prepared applicant will submit well ahead of the deadline to ensure there is time left if something goes wrong. The later in the application process, the greater the risk that something may go wrong that cannot be remedied. And once the online proposal system is closed for the year, we cannot assist you. We have received dozens of "hard luck" stories about bad internet connections or electricity blackouts to explain why an application was late. The answer is to start in time.

INSIDE UNDEF

UNDEF partners with International Herald Tribune and Kathimerini in holding Athens Forum on Democracy

To mark the International Day of Democracy, International Herald Tribune and Kathimerini newspapers convened, in cooperation with UNDEF, the “Athens Forum 2013: Democracy under Pressure” in the Ancient Agora of Athens -- the birthplace of democracy. The event, which can be watched in its entirety [here](#), was part of the Herald Tribune’s The Global Conversation series of high-level debates and panel discussions on key global challenges. Panellists included ministers from India and Sweden, two of UNDEF’s top donors.

The discussion examined the state of democracy in the world and the pressure resulting from economic, social and religious factors. Participants included Antonis Samaras, Prime Minister of Greece; Giorgos Kaminis, Mayor of Athens; Carl Bildt, Sweden’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and “the best connected world leader”, according to a new study of Twitter; Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development of India, the world’s largest democracy; New York Times columnist Roger Cohen; Masha Gessen, Russian-US journalist author; Sultan Al-Qassemi, leading blogger and voice on the Arab Spring; and Annika Savill, UNDEF Deputy Executive Head.

As Ban Ki-moon said in his [message](#) to the 16 September Forum, the meeting place in the Agora reminds us that the practice of democracy is not a spectator sport and that it is more like a marathon than a sprint.



UNDEF co-hosts International Day of Democracy event at International Peace Institute

UNDEF co-convened an event at the International Peace Institute in New York on 16 September to mark the International Day of Democracy. The invitation-only event, “Democratization at the Sharp End” brought together leading UN officials from the UN’s work in the field, including Edmond Mulet, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti; Margaret Vogt, outgoing Special Representative of Secretary-General in the Central African Republic; and Sanaka Samarasingha, UN Resident Coordinator in Belarus. They were joined by Michael Doyle, Chair of the Advisory Board of UN Democracy Fund, and Harriette Williams Bright, Advocacy Officer of the NGO and UNDEF grantee Femmes Africa Solidarité. The discussion, organized by IPI and the UN Working Group on Democracy, focused on challenges and opportunities of integrating support for democratization processes in the day-to-day work of peacekeepers, special political missions, UN resident coordinators and their colleagues – all of whom must find ways to deliver on the UN’s normative foundations of democratization by contributing to it in practice in the field. The panellists agreed on the need to understand that democracy cannot be imposed from outside; that democracy means far more than holding elections; and that issues of legitimacy, security and accountability are fundamental to the scope for democratization.



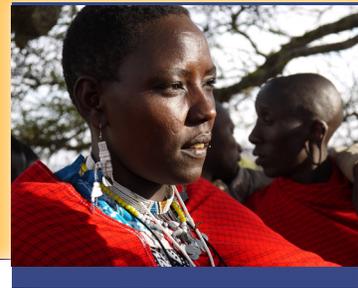
Jeffrey Wright narrates UNDEF film in UN studio

UNDEF Board member Jeffrey Wright, the award-winning actor currently starring in Boardwalk Empire and the upcoming Hunger Games sequel, recently came to the UN television studio to record the narration for a new documentary on an UNDEF project. “When I’m not busy acting on stage or screen, I’m an advocate for the people of Sierra Leone,” Mr. Wright said. “As a member of the Board of the UN Democracy Fund, UNDEF, I’m especially excited to tell you this story about one of our Sierra Leone projects: Building the Capacity of First-Time Parliamentarians. Like all UNDEF projects, it’s carried out by civil society organizers working to engage all groups in democratic processes. I hope you will be inspired by the men and women you are about to meet in this film. The message is clear. Let’s not wait for Governments to act. Let’s organize. Let’s be the doers of democracy.”



Strengthening democracy through adult education of Maasai women in Tanzania

In the Longido District of northern Tanzania, UNDEF supports a community development project among the Maasai population with a special focus on women. It works to strengthen women's role in decision-making and priority-setting to better reflect their needs. In 12 target villages, Women Role Models have been selected who will be trained in civic education by the implementing NGO Longido Community Development Organisation, and then go on to share their knowledge and educate other community members -- women and men alike -- thus strengthening both equal participation and other democratic practices in Maasai communities. Project beneficiaries met with UNDEF Programme Officer Hanna Norell in Longido in October 2013.



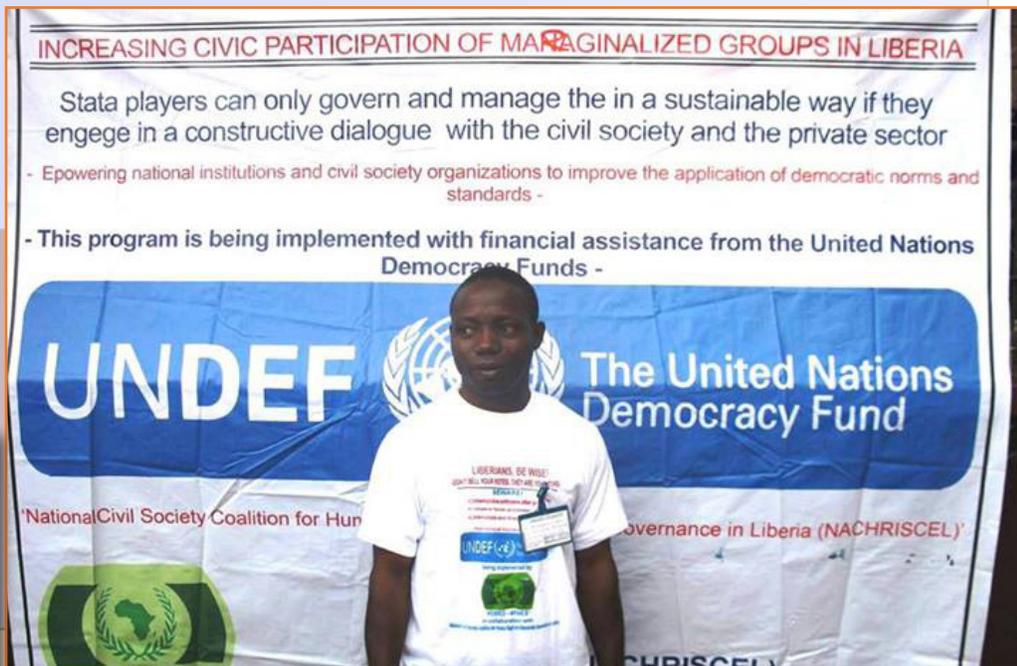
Building women grassroots movement in Uganda

An UNDEF project in Uganda works to build a critical mass of women grassroots activists who demand accountability and improved service delivery to communities. The project seeks to influence democratic processes through empowering communities to hold their leaders accountable and to demand for gender-sensitive service delivery. It also supports legislators in enacting gender-sensitive legislation and programmes. The project held a women's conference to provide an avenue for women to assess progress on the demands on their agenda. The project is implemented by the Forum for Women in Democracy.



Making votes count in Liberia

Studies show that voters in Liberia, particularly rural women and youth, vote out of fear and ignorance because the majority are illiterate and have no access to civic or voter education. An UNDEF-funded project provides voter and civic education in rural areas as vital mechanisms to ensure that rural constituents understand their rights, the nature of political processes and options available to them when voting with focus on women and youth; develops advocacy, leadership, communication and lobbying skills for aspiring youths and women candidates; monitors electoral and post-electoral processes; builds capacity of elected youth and women members of parliament.



Tournée nationale pour inciter les jeunes au Gabon



Au Gabon, le FNUD soutient un projet pour inciter les jeunes à la vie politique. Le but est de promouvoir leur participation active aux différents processus électoraux, à travers la sensibilisation, l'organisation sur l'ensemble du pays de campagnes de sensibilisation et d'information, de séminaires, de concerts et de conférences sur leurs droits civiques et politiques. Mis en œuvre par le Réseau des organisations libres de la société civile pour la bonne gouvernance au Gabon, le projet a récemment lancé une tournée nationale dans les villes de Libreville, Owendo, Lambaréné, Oyem, Port-Gentil et Franceville, sujet d'un reportage dans [Gabon Review](#).

GABON Review
L'information quotidienne sur la vie du Gabon

Reforming criminal justice systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

A new UNDEF-funded project works to help reform criminal justice systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It focuses on promoting alternative, non-custodial sanctions; early-release mechanisms, especially for women inmates; community sanctions, diversion, mediation in juvenile justice systems; engaging civil society in advocating and fostering human rights and democracy; and legal and social training for women and juvenile probationers to help them re-integrate into society. Leaders of the project, implemented by Penal Reform International, recently met with UNDEF Deputy Head Annika Savill in Tbilisi.



Getting out the vote among women and young people in Azerbaijan

For Azerbaijan's presidential elections on 9 October 2013, and parliamentary elections in November 2015, UNDEF funds a project in Azerbaijan to build awareness of electoral process and voting rights among local communities, with a special focus on women and youth. In this way, it works to strengthen participation in democratic processes of the future. Implemented by Azerbaijan Youth Union, the project held two days of training in basic principles of voting rights in Lenkaran City in August 2013. Following the workshop, participants with previously weak knowledge of electoral processes rights voiced their determination to vote.



Democracy and human rights education for all schools in Armenia



A new UNDEF project in Armenia will work to introduce a policy on democracy and human rights education for all public school graduates. Implemented by Armenia-CIVITAS, it will work to strengthen democratic and human rights culture and competence by enhancing teachers' capacity, developing interactive, student-friendly teaching/learning materials, introducing democracy and human rights education into the higher pedagogical education curriculum, establishing a center for democracy and human rights education. The center will ensure sustainability and long-term impact.

UNDEF in the NEWS

Young people of Pakistan call for one nation, one agenda

An UNDEF Pakistan project held a national youth conference in Lahore in September under the heading “One Nation, One Agenda: Democracy and Peace”. The project, implemented by the Chanan Development Association, works to strengthen the capacity of local civil society organizations with a focus on youth, women, and religious minorities in 50 districts of Pakistan. The conference yielded major coverage in the **Express Tribune**, the **Daily Times** and **BBC Newshour**.



UNDEF beneficiary elected Mayor of Ahmedabad

A graduate of an UNDEF-funded project for women’s empowerment in India has been elected Mayor of Ahmedabad, a city with a population of six million. Meenaxiben Patel, elected Mayor in April 2013, participated in a training and capacity-building programme funded by UNDEF and implemented by the New Delhi-based Centre for Social Research before being elected. Active in politics and civil society organizations for over 15

years, Ms. Patel described the UNDEF-funded programme as essential in providing leadership, lobbying and management skills, adding: “These types of training will help in empowering women, and result in them actively participating in politics -- which is very much necessary in a country like India.”



UNDEF in the NEWS

UNDEF-funded local democracy report launched during UN General Assembly



Diplomats, UN officials and civil society representatives gathered during the opening of the UN General Assembly for the launch of the UNDEF/Hunger Project 2013 State of Participatory Democracy Report. The **Report** is part of a two-year project to cultivate a global community of practice, develop a multidimensional Participatory Local Democracy Index, and publish an annual report of its findings. The report was covered in the **Huffington Post** and **El Diario**.

The **event's** keynote speaker, Mexico's Under-Secretary for Social and Human Development, Ernesto Nemer Alvarez, said that in Mexico, participatory democracy "seeks to have an impact in a determined way in governance, social peace and fundamentally, in the development of the nation."

The context for the project is that remarkable innovations have emerged in local democracy and recent legislation to move government closer to the people, while there is a big gap between the policy and the implementation. Too often, local government lacks the financial and human resources, decision-making autonomy, and mechanisms for social accountability to fulfil their responsibilities. There are thousands of

individual experts and organizations devoted to these issues, yet most of them have lacked a global forum. There are no agreed-upon measures of local governance, nor is there a global database.

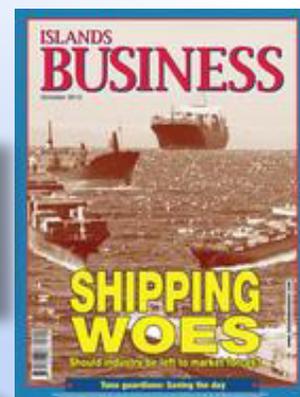
Following a series of consultations with experts in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, a five-dimensional index was developed, and surveys were conducted among practitioners worldwide to measure both the legal structure and perceptions of how well it is being implemented. The results are presented in the first State of Participatory Democracy Report. Other speakers included UNDEF Executive Head Roland Rich and Hunger Project president Mary Ellen McNish.



A new beginning for women in Fiji



A new UNDEF project in Fiji will work to increase women's representation in Parliament. Implemented by the National Council of Women, the launch was covered by **Radio New Zealand International**, **Islands Business**, and the **Fiji Sun**.



WORTH READING

UNDEF Head addresses Democracy Caucus at UN

UNDEF Executive Head Roland Rich **spoke** at the Democracy Caucus, the annual September meeting of the Community of Democracies on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Addressing this year's theme of "Democracy and Development", Mr. Rich quoted the UN Secretary-General: "Development is more likely to take hold if people are given a genuine say in their own governance, and a chance to share in the fruits of progress." He added that this short sentence held three highly significant elements: "Development is more likely to take hold" was another term for sustainability; "people are given a genuine say in their own governance" reflected the fact that only democracy as a system provided genuine involvement, because of the open and contested nature of ideas, policies and leadership; and "a chance to share in the fruits of progress" implies that democracies are better equipped to deal with inequality issues and reverse the trend.



Obama and Ban Ki-moon in defence of civil society during UN General



President Obama's UN roundtable hosted a round table on civil society on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2013. A strong **message** from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, stating: "If leaders do not listen to their people, they will hear from them – in the streets, the squares, or, as we see far too often, on the battlefield. There is a better way. More participation. More democracy. More engagement and openness. That means maximum space for civil society."

State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment

UNDEF grantee Civicus has issued its **2013 Civil Society Report** amid a global context that poses considerable challenges for civil society, as well as offering some opportunities. The report offers a comprehensive guide to the enabling environment and recent trends in legitimacy, transparency and accountability; connections, coalitions and solidarity; the policy and legal sphere; government, politics and relations with civil society; public attitudes and participation; corruption; communications and technology; and resources.

