

WINDOW FOR NEW PROJECT PROPOSALS OPENS 15 NOVEMBER

UNDEF opens its annual window for project proposals for its Tenth Round of Funding on 15 November 2015, following the green light given by the UNDEF Advisory Board on 4 November (pictured).

Project proposals may be submitted on-line in English or French between 15 November and 31 December at www.un.org/democracyfund. Applicants can find guidelines, lessons learned, and examples of previous application forms here www.un.org/democracyfund/application-materials. 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\$100,000 to US\$300,000.

So far, UNDEF has funded almost 600 projects in over 100 countries, bringing total disbursement to over 150 million dollars. The large majority of funds go to local civil society groups. In this way, UNDEF plays a new and unique role, complementing through civil society 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 2014, UNDEF received over 2300 project proposals. Some 50 were selected for funding. 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-year, 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, will the project proposal formally be approved for funds disbursement – usually after September every year.

The Board also approved additional funding to expand UNDEF's existing project to empower Syrian women refugees in Turkey (see page 4).



Building independent debate among young people in Myanmar

An UNDEF-funded initiative works to build independent analytical thinking and skills in debate and public speaking among young people in Myanmar, so as to empower civil society to strengthen constructive criticism in the democratic transition process in Myanmar. Started a year before the November 2015 election, the project works with youth, political parties and social activists to examine sensitive social issues; provide debate trainings in six different regions to produce ethical debaters who can deliver logical convincing arguments to a wider public; create space for exchanging ideas through public forums; build strong debate education networks with local organizations to deliver debater trainings and to serve as a resource for the local communities. UNTV made a film about the project, linked [here](#).



Empowering citizens through legal papers in Peru

An UNDEF-funded project in Peru successfully completed its work in August 2015 to legally empower and enhance the democratic participation of peasant communities in the Puno region. Implemented by Microjusticia Perú, the project worked through legal outlets, legal orientation campaigns, and trained rural facilitators to provide vulnerable members of communities with legal documents and organizations with legal personality – thus allowing them to access a range of government benefits and play a meaningful role in democratic society. A group of women artisans were able to participate for the first time in the municipal participatory budget and presented a request for technical training and assistance to obtain better access to markets; large numbers of young people were able to access education services; and over a 100 associations can access economic opportunities and participate in democratic spaces. UNDEF Project Officer Hannah McGlue (pictured with organizers) visited the project in Puno in 2015.



UNDEF AT WARSAW DIALOGUE FOR DEMOCRACY



UNDEF's Deputy Executive Head for Programmes, Mikiko Sawanishi (pictured above, centre right, second row), participated in the fourth annual Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy in October 2015. Organized by the Government of Poland, a member of UNDEF's Advisory Board, the event was held under the theme of 'Democracy at the Crossroads? Current Threats and Opportunities'. The Dialogue sought to elucidate the recent phenomena of contested democratic standards, the decline of democracy in several parts of the world, the negative impact on civil, political, and human rights, and most important, the shrinking or even closing space for civil society. Participants included UNDEF grantees from Cambodia and Egypt. Together with a representative of the European Endowment for Democracy, Mikiko Sawanishi hosted a workshop on 'How to Successfully File a Grant Application and Implement a Project' in which she explained UNDEF's priorities, processes and successful action-oriented proposals. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon delivered a video message of support for the Dialogue, readable [here](#).



STRENGTHENING PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN JORDAN

UNDEF funds a project in Jordan to foster a more informed public dialogue on human rights through strengthening media. It works for high quality journalism on human rights-related issues; holds on-air forums actively informing and engaging the public; builds media skills, tools and communications strategies including new information and communication technology to increase citizen participation and collect data relevant to local human rights issues. The project develops educational material that will last beyond the scope the project, and trains journalists to both use the new skills in their daily work as well as share them with colleagues. Designed to ensure sustainable impact, the project is implemented by Journalists for Human Rights together with a coalition of leading local academic, media and civil society partners, such as the Jordan Media Institute and Community Media Network. UNDEF Programme Officer Christian Lamarre (pictured, right) visited the project in Amman in November 2015 and met with head trainer Mohammad Shama.

A Pilot for Empowering Syrian Women Refugees

An UNDEF-funded project in Turkey works with Syrian women refugees in Reyhanli, in Reyhanli, near the Turkey-Syria border, so as to give them opportunities to organize, engage and support other refugees while preparing for the future, whether in Turkey or in Syria. The initiative thus focuses on the sizeable Syrian refugee communities who are currently seeking to build a life in Turkey and not planning to move on to Europe or elsewhere. The project is also intended to serve as a possible model for other Syrian refugee communities -- in Turkey but equally, in northern Europe. UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill visited the project in September 2015 to propose an expansion forward, including bringing all the above sub-projects together in one house so as to maximize synergies between them and to serve as a community and resource centre for all Syrians in Reyhanli, currently numbering 40,000 -- a proposal that was approved by the UNDEF Board in November 2015. "It's courage and work like yours that can transform a refugee from a statistic to a human being living in dignity," Annika Savill told the group during the visit. The women are trained in international law, including human rights, women's rights, child rights and humanitarian law; democratic mechanisms, project conceptualization and design; and communication techniques. The women have formed teams to propose, design, run and staff their own sub-projects, which will range from a legal practice to be run by lawyers among the refugee group who will review and validate legal and identity documents for Syrians in Turkey; a women's committee to coordinate information and services for Syrian women in Reyhanli; a child letter forum and a theatre ensemble, both intended to address the trauma of war and the refugee experience; a number of vocational programmes and a training centre for young girls, including to prevent child marriages -- a growing problem among Syrians in Turkey struggling to provide for their families.



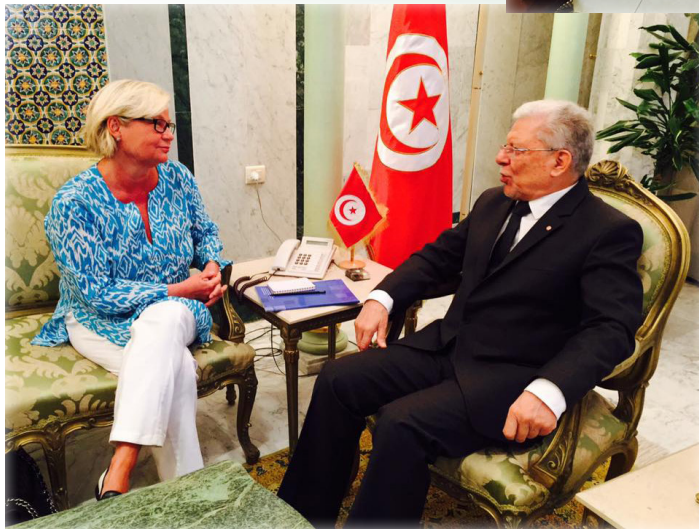
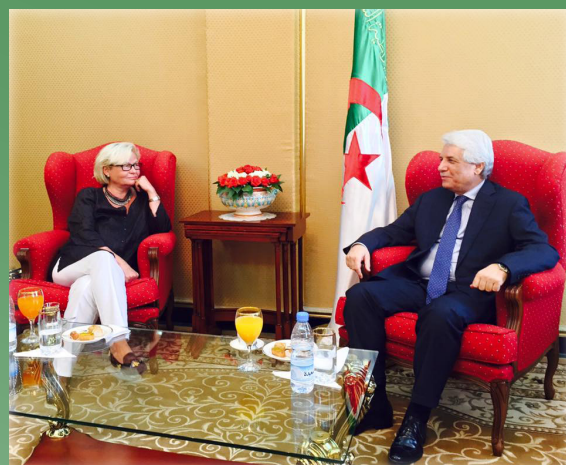
UNDEF explores ways to strengthen presence in Algeria and Tunisia

UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill visited Algeria and Tunisia in August and September 2015 to explore ways of optimizing and strengthening UNDEF's mission in both countries. Tunisia, the home and only remaining hope of the Arab Spring, is being racked by terrorism, a stagnant economy, and massive unemployment among university-educated youth -- particularly in the south and the interior. The latter issue is feeding frustration and extremism -- and contributing to Tunisia's export of jihadists, which at over 6,000 is more than that of any country in the world. UNDEF has funded almost 10 projects in Tunisia, including new initiatives in the south and the interior to promote local and participatory democracy and to support civil society in decentralization and governance.

Algeria has managed to build relative stability after the Black Decade of civil war and Islamic insurgency of the 1990s. This is largely thanks to a policy of amnesty and national reconciliation, combined with a programme with the nation's imams to counter extremism, and wide distribution of the nation's oil wealth including grants to young entrepreneurs. A gradual building of democracy and rule of law rests on the two pillars of a free media and an independent judiciary. Possible themes for future UNDEF initiatives include strengthened training and capacity-building of judges. Algeria's experience deserves to be shared more widely, including through lessons learned across the region and beyond, another possible theme for a future UNDEF

project. Judicious action is also needed to prevent plummeting oil prices from threatening to bring more volatility and a resurgence of extremism.

Ms. Savill met with the Ministers of Justice, Interior, Information and Solidarity in Algeria, and with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Civil Society in Tunisia, as well as a wide range of civil society groups in both countries.



UNDEF celebrates International Day of Democracy in Athens and New York

To mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, the **Athens Democracy Forum 2015** was held for the third year by the International New York Times in cooperation with the UN Democracy Fund. The three-day programme included discussions at the Acropolis Museum, the Old Athenian Parliament Building, the Megaron Conference Centre and the Ancient Agora of Athens -- the birthplace of democracy. Among the speakers were His Highness the Aga Khan; Sir Richard Dearlove, former head of MI6; Kishore Mahbubani; Giorgis Kaminis, Mayor of Athens; Paul Krugman and Roger Cohen of the New York Times; Sir Geoffrey Robertson; Paula Dobriansky; and Annika Savill, Executive Head of the UN Democracy Fund, whose remarks can be found [here](#).



Themes at the Forum included migration and civil society; the question of whether liberal democracy is universally applicable; how the widening wealth gap impacts democratic governance; the rise of fundamentalist movements; new media and new access to public information.



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a message of support that "gatherings like the Athens Democracy Forum provide the much-needed oxygen of dialogue... I am encouraged that you will discuss many complex issues that are at the heart of today's democratic debate -- from multiculturalism to modern media and the role money plays in politics."



At UN headquarters in New York, UNDEF and its partners in the UN Working Group on Democracy hosted a discussion event on the theme "Space for Civil Society" to address civil society's increasing importance amid today's challenges, and the growing restrictions on civil society organizations in a range of countries. Speakers included the Permanent Representatives to the UN of Bhutan, Poland and Sierra Leone; the Deputy Permanent Representatives of Chile and Sweden; Nilda Bullain, Vice-President of the International Center of Not-for-Profit Law; Arthur Larok, Co-Chair, ActionAid International Working Group on Civic and Political Space. The discussion was moderated by James Traub, author of the Freedom Agenda and columnist for Foreign Policy.

Ambassador Kunzang Namgyel of Bhutan, whose remarks are linked [here](#), stated that "there is clearly a need to strengthen the role and space of civil society organizations at the community, national, regional and global levels if we are to effectively address the many transnational challenges that confront us today". Ambassador Boguslaw Winid of Poland noted that "democracy is applied in various ways in countries, and should take into account cultural and local context while preserving the vitality of civil society". Ambassador Vandi Chidi Minah of Sierra Leone declared: "Civil society organizations are the conscience of governments."

Ambassador Carlos Olguín Cigarroa of Chile, whose remarks are linked [here](#), highlighted his Government's emphasis on citizen participation as "a process of cooperation in which the State and the society jointly identify political problems and discuss how to solve them". Ambassador Per Thöresson of Sweden, whose remarks are linked [here](#), stated: "Civil society is needed to channel the political will of people, to draw attention to problems and, not least, to permanently question and monitor power."

From the civil society side, Ms. Bullain said "Civil society is absolutely vital to democracy because civil society consists of citizens who take responsibility for their country". Mr. Larok said: "We are worried that often Governments may attempt to negatively impact public opinion against large NGOs that have financial resources".

