



UNDEF Update – No. 35 September 2017

## INSIDE UNDEF

# Almost 50 new UNDEF projects approved by UN Secretary-General

The UN Secretary-General has approved a short list of 49 project proposals for UNDEF's Eleventh Round of Funding, following recommendations by the United Nations Democracy Fund Advisory Board. UNDEF has contacted those short-listed.

UNDEF's Eleventh annual call for project proposals was open from 18 November 2016 to 18 December 2016. The call particularly welcomed projects promoting pluralism, diversity, and inclusion, a theme agreed at the UNDEF Advisory Board meeting of 10 November 2016, in addition to the established seven main areas for UNDEF projects: women's rights and empowerment/gender equality; community activism; rule of law and human rights; youth engagement; strengthening civil society capacity for interaction with government; media and freedom of information; tools for knowledge.

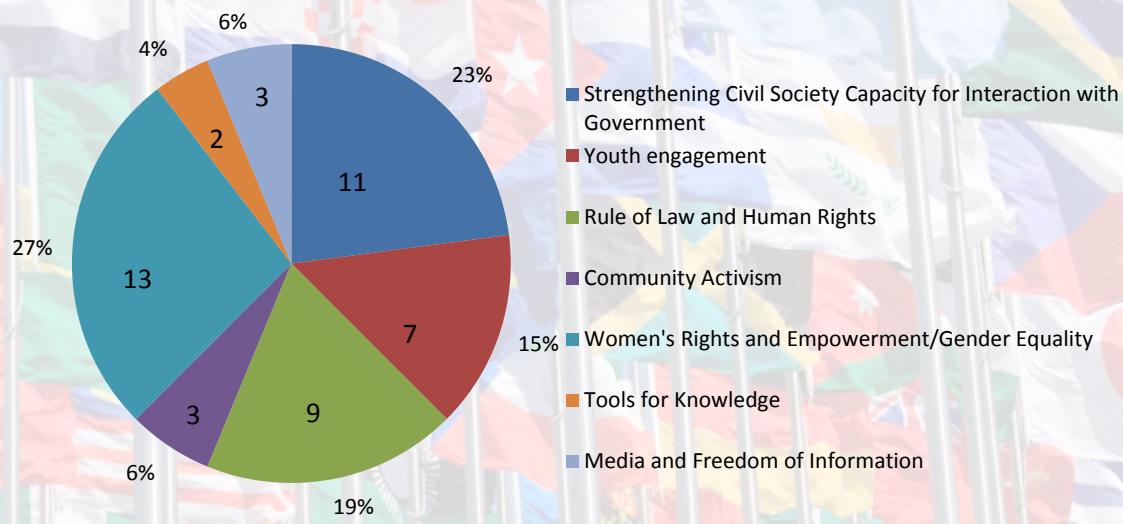
UNDEF received 3002 project proposals for this Eleventh Round, the highest number in six years and the second highest in the history of the Fund. The proposals originated from organizations in 154 countries, the vast majority local NGOs in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Given the large volume of proposals, UNDEF is not able to contact all applicants individually. Inclusion in the short list is a significant achievement, but it does not in itself mean that the project proposal will be approved for funding. Short-listed applicants are now required to complete the final stage of the selection process -- negotiating a Project Document



with UNDEF, which is in effect a contract between the grantor and the grantee. Only on the satisfactory conclusion of a project document, and its approval by the United Nations Controller, will the proposed project be formally approved for funds disbursement. The next window for project proposals is expected to open in mid-November. We encourage future applicants to start preparing now by going to the UNDEF website and reading project proposal guidelines, frequently asked questions and summaries of existing projects. In addition a dedicated lessons learned resource provides help and advice to on project management for civil society organizations [www.undeflessonslearned.org](http://www.undeflessonslearned.org)

## Projects by activities



# UNDEF partners with New York Times in fifth annual Athens Democracy Forum

The annual [Athens Democracy Forum](#) was held on 13-17 September 2017, organized for the fifth year by The New York Times in cooperation with the UN Democracy Fund and Athens City Hall. This year's programme included discussions on the future of polling, political discourse in the post-truth era, bridging the generational gap, the power of the political cartoonist, and progress towards the Global Sustainable Development Goals.

Speakers included former UN Secretary General Kofi A. Annan, who delivered the [Aristotle Lecture](#), at the Presidential Mansion, where he referenced UNDEF's role in supporting grassroots democracy; President of Greece Prokopios Pavlopoulos; Foreign Minister of Sweden Margot Wallström; Mayor of Athens Georgios Kaminis; former Prime Minister of Spain Felipe González, who was awarded the City of Athens Democracy Award; New York Times CEO Mark Thompson; New York Times writers Roger Cohen, Steven Erlanger, James Bennet; editorial cartoonist Patrick Chappatte; and UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill, whose remarks can be read [here](#).

Sessions were held at the Zappeion in the National Gardens of Athens; the Stoa of Attalos in the Ancient Agora of Athens – the very birthplace of democracy; and Costa Navarino, a sustainable destination in Messinia, southwest Peloponnese. Themes at this year's Forum included democracy and conflict prevention; the role of international organizations; political discourse in the post-truth era; the future of polling; and bridging the generational gap.

An interactive lunch in support of the Sustainable Development Goals was hosted by Marianna Vardinoyannos, President of the Marianna V Vardinoyannos Foundation, focusing on climate action and reducing inequalities. Read the remarks of Annika Savill to the SDG lunch [here](#).

An exhibition on democracy at the Hellenic Children's Museum was opened by the Mayor of Athens and UNDEF Executive Head, Annika Savill, whose remarks at the opening can be read [here](#).

For further information about the Forum, please go [here](#).



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

## Young people for better governance in Jordan and Lebanon

Over the last several years the influx of Syrian refugees into neighbouring states Jordan and Lebanon has led to significant challenges including in providing basic services, particularly for young people. An ongoing UNDEF-funded project in these two countries aims to address some of these challenges by increasing the civic engagement of young people – from both the host country communities and refugees - so as to ensure that public service delivery is more relevant and responsive.

The project is led by [ActionAid Arab Regional Initiative](#) and its activities are designed to increase youth engagement and motivation so that they have more of a role in key areas that affect their lives like education and health. As a consequence of this engagement, the project's long term aim is to deepen the democratic participation of youth in the region.

The project launched in February 2017. Since then, more than 200 young men and women have been trained on accountability issues to help them better understand the challenges of governance in emergency situations.

From this group, 20 youth will be selected to design and lead a campaign directed at a specific service delivery goal using creative activism. The objective of the training is to provide the 20 selected young people with the skills necessary to become effective community activists. It is hoped that this will in the future contribute to building citizen-based participatory democracy so that young people are able to better influence decision making processes.

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## How to work with people who use drugs?

Youth volunteers from central Asia recently participated in a five day regional training workshop on youth engagement and volunteering in the field of drug abuse. The workshop is part of an UNDEF-funded project that aims to promote the active participation of young people in drug policy development and implementation.

Named "Everywhere for Everyone – Leave No One Behind", the workshop focused on hard-to-reach populations. "How to work with people who use drugs?" was one of the many questions being discussed throughout the five days.

One of the exercises was the development of a Youth Declaration on drug policies followed by a final presentation of the results from individual working group sessions where youth volunteers had to come up with recommendations for youth drug policies. Behind the project is the international NGO [Villa Maraini](#) in collaboration with several other partners, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society. The workshops have been a big success in getting young people engaged in volunteering. The first workshop took place in Nairobi, Kenya. The final workshop will take place in Chujand, Tajikistan in October.



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

## Empowering young Belarusians living with disabilities

An UNDEF-funded project recently organized an international forum on the empowerment of people with disabilities titled "Available work and employment for people with disabilities". The forum took place in May and was implemented by the Belarusian charitable public association "[World Without Borders](#)." The project seeks to empower young people with disabilities through the creation of opportunities for work and employment, so as to improve their quality of life and encourage them to participate in the society.

More than 250 people including scientists and representative of authorities from five countries – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova - attended the forum, which took place in Vitebsk, Belarus. The two-day event covered four thematic sessions on social entrepreneurship and self-employment, professional and vocational training, the role of social services and legal regulations to implement the rights of people with disabilities to work.

In addition to the international forum, the project involves the opening and operation of a support centre for entrepreneurial activity and employment of young people with disabilities in Belarus.



## Democracy and peace: UNDEF brainstorms with its beneficiaries in Colombia

On 12 June, UNDEF organised a roundtable for current and past grantees at the UNDP office in Bogota. The event provided a valuable opportunity to update on project implementation, exchange lessons learned, and establish new contacts. To date, UNDEF has funded eight projects in Colombia. Participants came from Corporacion Opcion Legal, Fundacion Compartir – Todos por la Educacion, Fundacion para la Libertad de Prensa, Cooperacion Centro de Apoyo Popular and Grupo Promotor Reforma Politica. There was general agreement that UNDEF support had provided the opportunity for the organisations to grow and work in new areas.



Emmanuel Vargas from Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa, recipient of two UNDEF grants working on freedom of expression issues highlighted that the seed funding from UNDEF had allowed the organisation to expand and learn rapidly, moving from three people to a more established and well-recognised organisation both within the country and abroad. Furthermore, through policy work and research conducted throughout project implementation, a network of academics and experts on the issue had been built up.

This has raised the credibility of the NGO and allowed various disparate voices to unite. The Todos por la Educacion project which aims at improving the advocacy skills of young citizens, in order to promote actions towards addressing inequalities in education has become the main civil society voice on education issues with a strong network of young volunteers across the country.

UNDEF flexibility was particularly welcomed especially in view of the changing political climate. Current grantee [Corporacion Opcion Legal](#) working in the Cauca and Caqueta regions of the country empowering women victims of armed conflict underscored the importance of UNDEF guidance. Under the project, they in turn are helping build the capacity of local CSOs in the two target regions.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### Fighting for LGBT rights in Bolivia

A documentary on Bolivian transgender rights was recently screened in La Paz at the forum “Progress and Challenges relating to the human rights of the LGBT community”. The documentary was produced as part of the UNDEF funded project “Building an Inclusive Democracy through Knowledge-building and Dialogue on LGBT rights”. Implemented by the NGO, [Coordinadora de la Mujer](#), the project goal is to enhance the leadership and advocacy skills of the Bolivian LGBT community and develop a political agenda to include LGBT rights in Bolivian law.

The screening was attended by civil society organizations, social movements and state authorities in La Paz. Entitled “Nacer” (literally meaning “Born Again”), this documentary describes the background to the Gender Identity Law in Bolivia. Stories are told through the voices of advocates for this law who describe the challenges they faced lobbying for the law and describe how it was finally enacted as the Gender Identity Law 807 in May 2016. The law protects transgender people’s right to legally change their genders.

The documentary can be viewed on this [link](#).



### TimeBank: Sharing knowledge and skills among communities of Ecuador

An UNDEF funded project in Ecuador seeks to overcome lack of community engagement through creating platforms for citizens to build solidarity in their communities and to promote active participation in the daily life of Quito. Limited social participation and lack of community cohesion remain challenges to Ecuadorian democracy. According to a 2013 survey, more than 80 percent of the inhabitants of capital city Quito had never participated in local community meetings or been a member of any type of community organization. The platform [Time Bank](#) developed under the project serves as a knowledge-sharing space for civil society and citizens in Quito to create dialogue. They are encouraged to exchange their skills and knowledge by offering or requesting various types of training courses via the Time Bank platform. In addition to training citizens to better use this platform, the NGO collaborates with local agencies in holding regular meetings and workshops in the neighborhoods, aiming to increase dialogue, promote voluntary action and enhance social and cultural cohesion among members of the community.



# UNDEF kicks off interactive lessons learned



Following the successful launch of UNDEF's interactive lessons learned platform, a series of factsheets are now available distilling key learnings across different projects on common UNDEF project management themes.

So far there are factsheets on working with radio, using technology, project budgeting, measuring impact and campaigning. The factsheets provide easy to digest learning relevant to many different projects, so future grantees or interested readers can get inspired.

<https://www.undeflessonslearned.org/factsheets/>

One of the topics highlighted is campaigning. Many UNDEF projects contain a campaigning or advocacy aspect. A campaign, which is properly executed, can help achieve project outcomes. Key lessons about how to put in place a campaigning element in a civil society project include:

- Hold discussions and conduct surveys with project stakeholders and participants to establish the specific needs of the target group of your campaign. It will also provide a baseline that enables you to assess the campaign's impact once completed.
- Campaign audiences usually remember and respond well to visual information and examples, no matter whether received in print or animated formats, such as flyers, video spots, exhibitions or even street theatre play.
- Focus on key messages and emphasise the positive benefits of the change being advocated for – for example, the societal advantages that can be expected from equal participation of women in decision making processes.

## New analysis of civil society's role in democracy

In his newly published book, Democracy in Crisis, Roland Rich focuses on the emergence of potential threats to democracy in regions from all across the globe, and asserts that a strong civil society is essential for preventing a slide towards de-democratization.

Rich, who served as the Executive Head of UNDEF from 2007 to 2014 where he supervised projects implemented by over 600 civil society organizations, suggests that the quality of civil society varies greatly by country for a number of reasons, including economic ability.

These conclusions also uphold the importance of grant-based organizations such as UNDEF, which provide a form of global solidarity by financially supporting countries that lack the resources to build up a strong civil society, as well as give these countries opportunities to advocate ideas and disseminate information to the public.

Rich is currently a member of the faculty of the Department of Political Science at Rutgers University. Prior to his time at UNDEF, he served as the director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University (1998 – 2005).

