

## Secretary-General approves UNDEF short list of over 50 new projects

The UN Secretary-General has approved a short list of 52 project proposals for UNDEF's Ninth Round of Funding, following recommendations by the United Nations Democracy Fund Advisory Board. UNDEF has contacted those short-listed. 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, lessons learned for applicants, frequently asked questions and summaries of existing projects.



## UNDEF to celebrate International Day of Democracy in Athens and New York



To mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, the **Athens Democracy Forum 2015** will be held for the third year by the International New York Times in cooperation with the UN Democracy Fund. The three-day programme will include discussions at the Acropolis Museum, the Old Athenian Parliament Building, the Megaron Conference Centre and the Ancient Agora of Athens -- the birthplace of democracy. Speakers will include His Highness the Aga Khan; Sir Richard Dearlove; Kishore Mahbubani; Paula Dobriansky; Giorgis Kaminis, Mayor of Athens; Paul Krugman and Roger Cohen of the New York Times; and Annika Savill, Executive Head of the UN Democracy Fund. Themes will include 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."

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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
MESSAGE TO THE THIRD ATHENS DEMOCRACY FORUM  
Athens, 15 September 2015

I commend you for coming together in the birthplace of democracy to observe the International Day of Democracy, in cooperation with the United Nations Democracy Fund.

The painstaking work of building democracy is never finished. At times, while pushing the proverbial boulder up the hill, your work may feel like the unending labour of Sisyphus: each succeeding generation is obliged to argue for democracy, and to work towards strengthening its foundations.

In that work, gatherings like the Athens Democracy Forum provide the much-needed oxygen of dialogue. They demonstrate that diversity is a strength; that giving voice to all people is our collective responsibility; that freedom of expression and respect for the beliefs of others are not mutually exclusive; that when the people have spoken and when they have been heard, democracy lives.

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.

This year, as the international community strives to agree on new sustainable development goals and a new universal and meaningful climate agreement, we need all global citizens to engage. On this International Day of Democracy, may the oxygen of dialogue travel from Athens to places far and wide around the world.

  
BAN KI-MOON

At UN headquarters in New York, UNDEF and its partners in the UN Working Group on Democracy will host a discussion event on the theme "Space for Civil Society", in light of the growing restrictions on civil society organizations in a range of countries.

Speakers will include the Permanent Representatives of Bhutan, Chile, Poland, Sierra Leone and Sweden, as well as representatives from ActionAid International and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. The discussion will be moderated by James Traub, columnist for Foreign Policy and author of *The Freedom Agenda*.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

## Focus on young people: Empowering youth in Malawi and Zambia

With populations in both Malawi and Zambia consisting of over 50 per cent young people, there is an increasing push among governments, development partners and civil society to recognize the specific needs and vulnerabilities of young people as well as their immense capacity to contribute positively to development.

Two UNDEF projects are capitalizing on this momentum by focusing on building the capacity of young people to play a strengthened meaningful role in governance structures. The Malawi Human Rights Youth Network is working with member youth organizations and local government across all three regions of the country to strengthen partnerships and increase understanding. The project kicked off in December 2014 and January 2015 with a series of consultative meetings at regional level bringing together 60 youth leaders to develop a national level roadmap of priority issues and to discuss common challenges. Issues raised included a lack of funding available at council level to undertake youth related activities; lack of understanding of young people's needs as genuine stakeholders and their potential; and conversely a lack of understanding among youth as to how they can effectively play a role in local government and a limited ability to undertake effective and constructive lobbying and advocacy. To help counter this, the second stage of the project has provided tailor-made practical training to select members of youth affiliate organizations on budgeting, leadership skills, structure and roles of councils. Each participant developed an advocacy action plan with their respective organization and provided cascade training to its own members.



Boosting the capacity of these young people and increasing spaces for dialogue is further envisaged via internships in local government, talk shows and advocacy via social media. MHYRN is also running issue-based sensitisation campaigns to raise general public awareness on issues raised by the youth groups in the roadmap in the form of roadshows with theatre and dance.

Success story: An action plan developed by Malawi beneficiary Youth Impact, following the UNDEF-funded training, focused on advocating inclusion of youth in local government structures. Following interface meetings with the District Council, the latter's executive committee agreed on the importance of including a youth representative on the council and encouraged subsequent election. "It was my first time to learn about local governance during the training in March, said Cecilia Chivunga, Youth Impact's Executive Director. " I thank MHRYN and UNDEF for the informative training, young people of Machinga are now actively engaging local leaders on development projects because they have been informed that they have a right to participate and a right to development."



In Chipata, the Eastern region of Zambia, the UNDEF-funded project Good Governance and Accountability Promotion aims to strengthen youth participation in democratic processes in order to promote transparency, accountability and good governance. Through training on budget tracking and social audit exercises as well as leadership skills, youth-led civil society organizations are being empowered to monitor the use of constituency development funds and encouraged to create informed platforms among themselves. Implemented by the NGO **Youth Development Foundation**, the project raises awareness of communities on their rights and roles in holding duty-bearers accountable through civic awareness meetings, blogs and radio talk shows.



## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

## New media for local democratic discourse in Pakistan

Pakistan has a massive youth population which comprises 60 per cent of the country's 190 million people. Many of them are increasingly active on social media. An UNDEF-funded project works uses this tool to engage youth on political and governance and local development issues. As grassroots issues receive limited or inadequate attention in national media, web-based media is key in addressing them in smaller and rural districts.

Implemented by **Punjab Lok Sujag** the project works in 10 districts of Punjab to develop district-level web and Facebook pages discussing issues such as health, education, rights, environment, and public service. Launch ceremonies were held in Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Vehari and Jhang in May and June 2015, bringing together print and electronic media, associations of teachers, traders, doctors and farmers, civil society organisations, political parties, elected representatives, government officials, social activists, poets, lawyers and academia.



## El Salvador: The right to know and HeForShe

In El Salvador, a country ravaged by renewed violence perpetrated by criminal gangs, or maras. UNDEF funds a number of projects to empower citizens to make use of recently adopted legislation to build rule of law and human rights. UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill visited both projects in San Salvador in July 2015.

One initiative, implemented by **La Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo**, works to advance the implementation of the recent Law for Access to Public Information against considerable structural obstacles throughout the country including lack of awareness, capacity and political will. The project operates in 10 municipalities to support public and private stakeholders in publicizing, implementing and overseeing enforcement of the law.



Another project works to give effect to new laws on combating violence and eliminating of discrimination against women. Implemented by **Fundación Mundubat** in San Salvador and Zacatecoluca, it focuses on capacity building, state monitoring, institutional strengthening, and coordinating stakeholders through training, public awareness campaign, civil society observatory monitoring so as to work in concert with the state designated body. Several of the implementing partners are men who help to raise awareness of the problematic sides of masculinity. It was thus a precursor to the UN solidarity campaign HeForShe which engages men and boys as agents of change taking action against inequalities faced by women and girls.





## UNDEF IN THE NEWS

## San Salvador democracy ministerial sounds a warning bell on space for civil society

The Community of Democracies held its Eighth Ministerial Meeting in San Salvador at the end of July, hosted by El Salvador's Foreign Minister, Hugo Martínez, and co-organized by the Community Secretary-General, Maria Leissner.

At a panel moderated by Minister Martínez, UNDEF Executive Head Annika Savill **spoke** on the closing space for civil society, making the point that "it is possible to have strong state and a strong civil society at the same time. It is often a winning combination. Many of the most stable and established democracies in our world have built their success on precisely this model." Also on the panel was leading democracy scholar Larry Diamond (pictured) of Stanford University, who elaborated on the many dimensions of the democratic recession in critical parts of the world.



During the national interventions, India's Minister of State Vijay Kumar Singh **highlighted** India's support for UNDEF : "India has been a strong supporter of the United Nations Democracy Fund launched in July 2005 to assist projects involving civil society organizations to consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions. India has contributed nearly \$32 million to the UN Democracy Fund, the second largest by any country."

The presidency of the Community was handed over from El Salvador to the United States, which will to serve as president until 2017. In a video message to the CD, President Obama expressed gratitude for the broad support for the presidency and announced that the United States will host the next Governing Council meeting in late September on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. During its term, the United States will seek to strengthen the capacity of the Community to address critical governance issues, including supporting civil society, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting good governance and protecting human rights, and will work to expand the Community's collaboration among member states to advance democracy and democratic values, as called for in the foundational Warsaw Declaration. The United States has canvassed other members of the Governing Council for their views on the state of the Community and priorities for the Community's next two years and, in collaboration with the Secretary General, will incorporate these priorities in the Community's next annual work-plan.

