



About UNDEF

In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. They also reaffirmed that there is no single model of democracy, that it does not belong to any country or region, and reaffirmed the necessity of due respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination. The Summit Outcome stresses that democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Heads of State and Government renewed their commitment to support democracy and welcomed the establishment of a Democracy Fund at the United Nations. The United Nations is deeply engaged in useful and effective support of democracy in a variety of ways, and the creation of the UNDEF complements those efforts.

UNDEF has taken just a few years to be able to lead efforts to strengthen democracies from the grass roots up through its support for innovative projects and partnerships [...]

- Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, speaking at the Seventh UNDEF Advisory Board Meeting on 28 March 2008

UNDEF's Work with Civil Society

The primary purpose of UNDEF is to promote democratization. UNDEF provides assistance for projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and in particular, initiatives that are intended to ensure the full participation of all groups in the democratic process. Project funding provided by UNDEF is primarily directed towards strengthening the voice of civil society. UNDEF believes that active Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are an essential component of democracy. UNDEF works with CSOs to help strengthen their capacity to participate actively and effectively in the democratic process.

During its first round of funding, UNDEF provided grants for 122 projects with a total value of \$35 million. During the second round of funding, UNDEF is providing \$25 million for 86 projects. Projects approved for the second round of UNDEF funding have a major focus on Africa, representing 32.6 percent of funds (see Chart 1). Reflecting UNDEF's aim to include all groups in a democratic society and its grassroots' approach, the largest share of the approved projects, 30.2 percent, is focused on Women's Empowerment, followed by Community Development, 19.8 percent (see Chart 2).

UNDEF's focus on civil society empowerment is also reflected in the composition of its Advisory Board. The UNDEF Advisory Board, has thirteen member states as well as four individual representatives and two representatives from civil society. The two CSO representatives are Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, Executive Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development; and Mr. Nicholas Howen, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists.

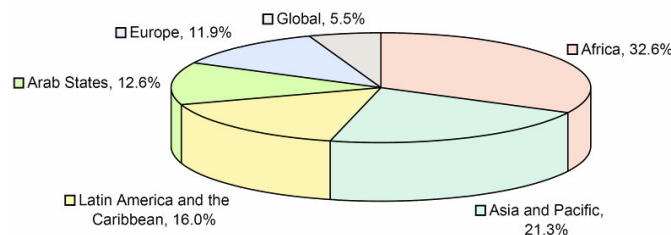


Chart 1: Regional Distribution of Project Funding, 2nd Round of UNDEF Funding (2008)

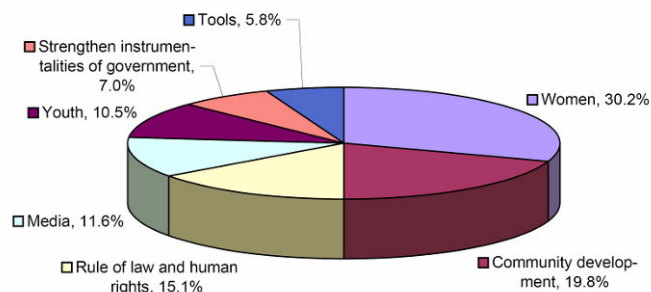


Chart 2: Projects by Key Activities, 2nd Round of UNDEF Funding (2008)

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)
1 United Nations Plaza, Room DC1-1330 • New York, NY 10017, USA
Ph: (917)367-8062 • Fax: (212)963-1486

E-mail: democracyfund@un.org • <http://www.un.org/democracyfund/>

UNDEF Project Story 1: GUATEMALA "Citizen Formation and Action with the Q'eqchi' People"

The Q'eqchi Mayan people, one of Guatemala's largest indigenous groups, are mostly living in the rural and northern provinces of Alta Verapaz, Izabal and Petén. They have historically been excluded from the political arena. The UNDEF funded project is being delivered by two CSOs, the Asociación Estoreña Para el Desarrollo Integral and the Asociación de Amigos del Desarrollo y la Paz. The project addresses issues relating to civic education, voter registration and electoral monitoring. Activities included 100 workshops on electoral laws and voting procedures for thousands of participants. Information relating to elections were both published and broadcast over radio.

During the implementation phase of the project, community development agenda were negotiated with newly elected authorities in 14 Q'eqchi townships. In addition, the project has produced significant changes: voter registration in the Q'eqchi region increased by 37 percent compared to 2003; the participation of women and young people rose by 40 percent and abstentions were reduced by 8 percent; and the 2007 elections were free of fraud or violence during the elections. The most concrete achievement was that six native Q'eqchi were elected as Mayors and four as Congressmen from their districts. These achievements point to a brighter future of the Q'eqchi populations in Guatemala.



Vanuatu: Participants of Workshop, Tanna

UNDEF Project Story 3: VANUATU "Enhancing Active Citizenship in Vanuatu"

UNDEF is supporting a project implemented by Transparency International Vanuatu (TIV) aimed at strengthening access to civic education in communities from the outer islands. Distance between islands is a challenge that needs to be overcome to enhance democratic participation in the political process. This initiative targets the remote and rural communities of these islands and seeks to contribute to the development of a social environment where educated citizens, aware of their rights, duties and the legitimate role expected from their leaders, are more politically involved and responsible.

TIV has started to implement its civic education awareness program with an initial series of training workshops held in six provinces. This civic education awareness program will be implemented in each of the 61 localities of Vanuatu and has begun with a series of workshops conducted on the island of Tanna in Tafea Province as well as in Torba Province. Fifteen localities have already been covered within the two provinces.

Participants have expressed their appreciation for this educational program which targets local communities as a priority. *"I wish Transparency International's team could come again and visit us to follow up and teach us further. The truth is that the vast majority of citizens don't know about their constitution, or "Mama Loa". We need more such training workshops"* underlined Iau, a teacher from Tanna Island.

UNDEF Project Story 2: SIERRA LEONE "Bolstering the Media to Promote Democracy throughout Sierra Leone"



Sierra Leone: A woman has finished voting during the 2007 elections

In May 2002, Sierra Leone held its second multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections, after eleven years of civil war. Since then, Sierra Leone has been a country in steady recovery. And one of the most effective ways to mobilize public support for democracy and human rights is through the media. UNDEF supports a two-year project entitled "Democracy, Human Rights and Media in Sierra Leone" implemented by a CSO, Journalists for Human Rights (JHR) intended to "bolster the media's ability to act as a medium of human rights and democratic information".

Activities include placing mentor trainers at media houses, organizing training workshops for journalists and holding lectures at the local university. Journalism trainers placed in local media houses oversee the publishing of around 400 news stories on human rights and democracy. JHR experts also conduct workshops for professional journalists, media editors and owners, throughout Sierra Leone. These workshops tackle some key issues such as reporting elections, covering press conferences as well as advice on ethics and story selection. Annually, starting from 2008, JHR plans to honor a local newspaper journalist or organization with a Human Rights Reporting Award. The 2008 Award was won by the Concord Times.