



I. CONTEXT OF THE 2nd CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS

During the last decade, the number of assaulted or murdered journalists has steadily increased around the globe. Between 2010 and 2020, UNESCO condemned the killing of over 950 journalists, while the trend of widespread impunity for the crimes committed against them persists: roughly nine out of 10 killings of journalists around the world remain unpunished¹.

Amidst the rise in the number of journalist killings and other attacks, **the nature of the violence against journalists is changing**². The ability of journalists to report the news and bring verified information to the public is being hampered by a wide range of attacks and violations, including threats, harassment, economic pressures, abusive judicial prosecutions (e.g. SLAPPs), arbitrary detentions, and a lack of access to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance. An increasing number of journalists is being killed outside of conflict areas, silenced for reporting on issues of corruption, crime and politics – while cases of online threat and harassment continue are on the rise.

The **global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic** and some of the emergency measures taken worldwide in response to the outbreak have significantly aggravated the challenges posed to press freedom and the work of journalists – at a time where the press has, more than ever, a pivotal role to play in informing the public³. In fact, the spread of the new coronavirus has been accompanied by the adoption of restrictive measures to cope with the pandemic and a growing surge of misinformation and disinformation (a “*disinfodemic*”⁴), creating a vicious circle that has severely impacted citizens’ access to timely and reliable information. In some cases, the declaration of states of emergency and the adoption of broad extraordinary measures to counter disinformation have resulted in undue or disproportionate restrictions to fundamental rights – particularly to the rights to freedom of expression and access to public information. The danger posed by potential legal charges and/or

¹ [2020 UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity](#).

² [Intensified Attacks, New Defences: Developments in the Fight to Protect Journalists and End Impunity](#). In Focus Series, World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development (2019).

³ [Journalism, Press Freedom and COVID-19](#). Issue brief in the UNESCO Series: World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development.

⁴ [Disinfodemic: Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation](#). UNESCO Policy Brief 1 (2020).

impending arrest and detention has heavy consequences on the capacity of journalists and public interest media to effectively and safely report and cover the pandemic.

The **wave of protests** that has broken out in recent year across the globe has also been accompanied by a notable escalation of attacks against the press, including increased harassment, arrests, and physical violence against journalists – both by security forces and protestors. Between 2015 and June 2020, UNESCO reported at least 10 cases of journalists killed while covering protests and identified 125 instances of attacks or arrests of journalists in 65 countries in the context of protests⁵. Such attacks and the limited access to legal protection hamper journalists’ freedom to inform citizens on the causes of protests and the response from State authorities without fear of persecution, with a negative impact on freedom of expression and the very foundations of democracy.

Women journalists face a multitude of specific risks and dangers because of both their profession and their gender. While women journalists encounter threats to their physical safety –such as assault, sexual assault, rape, and murder–, they are also targeted more frequently and more viciously by online abuse and harassment than their male colleagues. A UNESCO-ICFJ study showed that 73% of surveyed women journalists face online violence because of doing their job, while 30% of them said they self-censor as a result of being targeted by online abuse and violence. Further, abuses against them are often highly sexualized, based not on the content of their work, but on their physical traits, cultural background, or private life.

With only one in 10 cases of killings of journalists leading to a conviction, the lack of justice for these crimes emboldens those responsible for attacks against journalists and has a chilling effect on society as a whole. The resulting self-censorship deprives society of information and has a lasting impact on press freedom, while the rule of law and the citizens’ trust in the judiciary system are severely undermined.

The safety of journalists and the fight against impunity for crimes committed against them are essential to guaranteeing the fundamental right to freedom of expression, which is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is thus up to all stakeholders to promote a free, safe, and independent environment for journalists to perform their work without undue interference.

II. WHAT IS THE GLOBAL MEDIA DEFENCE FUND?

The Global Media Defence Fund (“GMDF” or “the Fund”) is a UNESCO Multi-Partner Trust Fund established within the framework of the *Global Campaign for Media Freedom* and under the overall umbrella of the [UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#), triggered by the initial donations of the United Kingdom and Canada.

Administered by UNESCO, the Fund is a responsive and effective mechanism to support not-for-profit organizations working on the ground at the local, regional, and international level in the undertaking or upscaling of projects that **bolster journalists’ legal protection** and/or **enhance media freedom through investigative journalism or strategic litigation**.

⁵ [Safety of Journalists Covering Protests: Preserving Freedom of the Press During Times of Turmoil](#). Issue brief in the UNESCO Series: World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development.

The GMDF operates through four key approaches or Outputs:

- **Output 1:** *Fostering international legal cooperation, as well as the sharing and implementation of good practices to promote the defense of journalists under attack;*
- **Output 2:** *Reinforcing the operationalization of national protection mechanisms and peer support networks to ensure journalists' rapid access to legal assistance, bolster their defense and enhance their safety, taking into account the gendered nature of the threats they face;*
- **Output 3:** *Supporting investigative journalism that contributes to reduced impunity for crimes against journalists, and enhancing the safety of those conducting this line of work;*
- **Output 4:** *Enhancing structures for fostering strategic litigation in order to protect environments where the legal frameworks are conducive to an independent, free, and pluralistic media ecosystem.*

The GMDF **supports and seeks joint action** between UNESCO and specialized implementation partners⁶, including specialized NGOs, media associations, journalists' unions, human right defenders, lawyers' associations and pro bono legal aid organizations, investigative journalism networks, foundations, academic institutions, and other not-for profit entities – as well as the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI), the Media Freedom Coalition's Consultative Network (formerly known as Advisory Network), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Under Output 2, Output 3 and Output 4, UNESCO launches annual or biannual competitive calls for partnerships open to relevant stakeholders willing to undertake or upscale local, regional, and/or global initiatives that contribute to advancing these Outputs.

The GMDF complements and synergizes with projects implemented under UNESCO's regular program and other extra-budgetary modalities supporting the Organization's work on safety of journalists and the issue of impunity – including [UNESCO's initiative to support the role of security forces and the judiciary](#) in protecting and ensuring an environment conducive to freedom of expression, as well as the [Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists](#) and the [International Programme for the Development of Communication \(IPDC\)](#). Relevant courses and training materials can be found [here](#).

III. WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS CAN BE SUPPORTED BY THIS FUND?

The **objective** of this Call for Partnerships is giving financial support to local, regional, and international projects that, in line with international human rights standards, will enhance media freedom and bolster journalists' legal protection **by advancing at least one** of the following GMDF Outputs:

⁶ Implementation partners are entities with a not-for-profit status to which UNESCO has entrusted partially or fully the implementation of programs or projects specified in a signed document (an *Implementations Partners Agreement* or IPA), along with the assumption of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of resources and the delivery of outputs as set forth in such a document. The partner receives funding through UNESCO to deliver the program or project but must **provide** its own "added value" in terms of a monetary or in-kind contribution.



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OUTPUT 2

Under Output 2, the GMDF supports projects aimed at **ensuring journalists' rapid access to legal assistance, bolstering their defense and enhancing their safety** by:

- a) Reinforcing the operationalization of national protection mechanisms;
- b) Reinforcing the operationalization of peer support networks (including journalists' unions and professional associations);
- c) Enabling or upscaling journalists' access to specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance.

Projects supporting Output 2 may implement different activities, including, amongst others:

- Establishing, operationalizing and/or reinforcing legal units/cells or legal protection teams that will provide rapid, specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance (including legal advice, legal representation, etc.) to journalists and/or media outlets facing attacks, threats, excessive or undue restrictions or pressures (including SLAPPs) for the rightful exercise of their profession.
- Providing specialized support to journalists and/or media outlets in cases involving threats, attacks, restrictions or pressures against them before national protection mechanisms.
- Foster the establishment of sustainable media lawyers' networks, legal aid organizations, or other initiatives aiming at enhancing journalists' access to specialized legal assistance.
- Documenting, monitoring, and evaluating the strategic implementation and effectiveness of existing national monitoring, prevention, protection and prosecution mechanisms for safety of journalists issues.
- Facilitating journalists' access to verified, practical information to enhance their legal protection, taking into account the gendered nature of the threats/attacks against them and the local legal and media environments.
- Setting up, operationalizing, and maintaining an early warning system to identify journalists in need of legal defense and alerting the judiciary and security forces in charge of protection.
- Engaging with public prosecutors and/or law enforcement agencies to promote and strengthen the compliance with international human rights law throughout the investigation process when an alleged crime is committed against a journalist.
- Documenting, monitoring, and evaluating the compliance of the investigation and prosecution of cases of crimes against journalists with [UNESCO-IAP Guidelines for Prosecutors on Cases of Crimes Against Journalists](#).
- Establishing, operationalizing, and coordinating peer support networks to connect journalists in need of legal protection with relevant organizations providing legal services to journalists.

OUTPUT 3

Under Output 3, the Fund supports investigative journalism that contributes to a) reduced impunity for crimes against journalists; and b) enhancing the safety of those conducting this line of work.

Projects supporting Output 3 may implement different activities, including (but not limited to):



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- Monitoring, documenting and broadly exposing cases of threats and/or attacks against journalists as a means of securing public commitment from relevant authorities to make perpetrators accountable, and thus achieve progress in the investigation of such crimes.
- Carrying out in-depth journalistic investigations for the purposes of ensuring judicial follow-up and holding relevant authorities (including prosecutors, law enforcement and the judiciary) accountable with regard to such cases of threats or attacks against journalists and cases of impunity.
- Advancing journalistic investigations to pursue or draw awareness to investigative work that risks being terminated or censored when journalists are attacked, threatened, arbitrarily imprisoned or murdered; and/or to ensure that the work of journalists who have been deterred or impeded from further pursuing it can be continued by peers who will bring those stories to light and widely disseminate them.

OUTPUT 4

Under Output 4, the GMDF supports strategic litigation to promote and protect environments where the legal frameworks are conducive to an independent, free, and pluralistic media ecosystem.

Strategic litigation consists in identifying and pursuing legal cases with significant strategic potential before national, regional and/or international courts, as part of a strategy to promote and protect freedom of expression and a free press. It involves selecting and bringing a case to a court of law with the goal of bringing about broader, systemic change, with an impact beyond the individual case.

This type of strategic litigation is aimed at:

- Creating progressive jurisprudence by setting innovative legal precedents related to key and emerging challenges to freedom of expression.
- Ensuring that national media laws and international human rights standards are correctly interpreted and enforced.
- Prompting or triggering reforms in national and regional legislation, policy and institutional practices, in line with international human rights standards.
- Enabling journalists and/or media outlets victims of threats, attacks, restrictions or pressures against them to seek reparation.

Cases supporting interventions through relevant UN special procedures mechanisms are also considered as strategic litigation for the purposes of this Output.

Projects supporting Output 4 may implement different activities, including (but not limited to):

- Identifying and pursuing the investigation, prosecution, and sanction of cases involving violations against journalists and/or the right to freedom of expression on the basis of strategic litigation before national, regional, and/or international courts.
- Producing, submitting, and encouraging *amicus curiae* briefs in relation to strategic litigation cases before higher national courts and regional/international human rights courts.
- Using UN special procedures mechanisms to intervene in response to cases of violence against journalists and violations to the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the press.



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- Enabling, promoting, or reinforcing legal collaboration between local, regional and international experts to provide expert legal guidance on cases with strategic potential and support further action to safeguard the right to freedom of expression and press freedom; improve and share jurisprudence conducive to an independent, free and pluralistic media ecosystem; and the reform of legal frameworks, policy, and practice.

IV. WHAT ARE THE ADMISSIBILITY & ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA?

Only submissions which comply with the admissibility and eligibility criteria will be subject of an in-depth evaluation.

4.1. ADMISSIBILITY

The admissibility conditions are as follows:

- The proposal (Application Form and Budget) and supporting documents must be submitted via email to gmdf@unesco.org.
- The proposal and supporting documents must be submitted before the Call deadline.
- The proposal submitted must be complete and in the right format (see required forms, documents and format under section VIII below).
- The proposal and supporting documents must be signed, where required, by the authorized representative of the candidate partner.

4.2. ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES

Candidate partners must comply with the following criteria:

a) Legal Status:

This Call for Partnerships is open to **not-for-profit entities only** (e.g. NGOs, media associations, journalists' unions, human right defenders, lawyers' associations and pro bono legal aid organizations, investigative journalism networks, foundations, academic institutions...). Their status does not permit the good or services they provide to be a source of income, profit or other financial gain for the units that establish, control, or finance them. Their purposes, function, and operation must be not-for-profit in character.

Candidate partners must have been active and registered as not-for-profit entities **for at least two years**.

Natural persons, private companies, unincorporated entities and organizations with less than two years of incorporation/activity are **not eligible** for funding.

b) Capacity:

Potential partners must meet the following criteria:

- Provide 'added value' in terms of a monetary or in-kind contribution (quantified): candidate partners must be able to contribute at least 5% of the total budget of the project, which must include direct costs relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the action.



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- Have a sound financial status (applicants must have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activity throughout the project period).
- Display basic managerial and record-keeping competencies, as well as appropriate internal control procedures.
- Display a commitment to defend and respect human rights, freedom of expression and gender equality.
- Have the capacity to:
 - Manage the volume of funds and to implement the agreed-upon activities in an efficient and effective manner.
 - Participate in planning, monitoring, and evaluation activities (the latter, if applicable).
 - Assign a staff to carry out or lead the implementation of the project.

Applicants who have already been awarded funding under the first Call for Partnerships of the GMDF, UNESCO's regular program or under other extra-budgetary modalities (such as IPDC or the Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists) **may also be eligible to apply** for a grant under the Global Media Defence Fund, if they meet the requirements listed above.

An applicant **cannot submit more than one** partnership proposal under this Call for Partnerships, and thus cannot be awarded more than one grant.

4.3. ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

4.3.1. Main Requirements and Special Features

Main Requirements

Basic Requirements. Eligible partnership proposals are those with a clear and verifiable outcome, objective(s), outputs and implementing activities that **directly contribute to advancing one or more of the GMDF Outputs** (excepting Output 1). The objective(s) of the action must be S.M.A.R.T.: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (18 months maximum), as well as operationally, technical, and financially feasible).

Proposed implementation modalities must effectively and efficiently contribute to the achievement of the objective(s) of the action.

Partnership proposals should go beyond the level of activities and seek long-term, sustainable change.

Activities that are part of a broader, ongoing action are eligible under this Call. Nevertheless, costs incurred prior to the date of the corresponding Implementing Partners Agreement are not eligible to be covered by the GMDF.

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). The proposed actions must be developed and implemented on the basis of a **human rights-based approach**: they must be based on international human rights standards and directed to promoting and protecting human rights, and must ensure to involve those who are most marginalized, excluded or discriminated against. All substantive legal and journalistic work receiving partial or total funding from the GMDF will be expected to abide by international standards on freedom of expression and safety of journalists (as set by the UDHR and ICCPR, as well

as relevant resolutions by the UN and regional human rights bodies), and must be in line with the UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

All partnership proposals must include a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

Gender Equality. In line with UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality⁷, UNESCO is committed to making a positive and lasting contribution to women's empowerment and the promotion of equality between women and men across the Organization's mandate. The GMDF is being implemented on the basis of gender-responsive⁸ and gender-transformative⁹ good practices, and prioritizes actions that give special attention to the specific threats to the safety of women journalists online and offline (gender-specific risks), and which enhance the capacities of women journalists to protect themselves against and deal with harassment and violence.

All partnership proposals seeking funding from the GMDF **must mainstream gender** throughout the development and implementation of the action they propose, in accordance with a gender-responsive and/or a gender-transformative approach.

Special Features: Preference and Special Attention

a) Preference: The GMDF shall give an additional score to partnership proposals meeting at least one of the following criteria:

Gender Equality: The GMDF shall prioritize to proposals making a significant contribution to gender equality through the implementation of their proposed actions, addressing the specific threats faced by women journalists and/or targeting women journalists as the main beneficiaries of the action (UNESCO Global Priority Gender Equality).

Africa: The GMDF shall prioritize to proposals coming from or with a focus on Africa (UNESCO Global Priority Africa).

b) Special Attention: The GMDF shall give particular attention to proposals:

⁷ Gender Equality: For UNESCO, gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

⁸ Gender-responsive: It requires for the implementation strategy of the action to include evidence-based gender analysis identifying and acknowledging the existing differences and inequalities between women and men, including inequalities in participation rates and in deriving benefits. The action should identify specific mechanisms or activities that would help bring about help in the desired direction (targeting and benefiting a specific group of women and men to achieve the goal of the action), addressing the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men.

⁹ Gender-transformative: It implements actions to address underlying causes of gender inequalities. The implementation strategy of the action must include evidence-based gender analysis not only identifying and acknowledging the existing differences and inequalities between women and men, but also the underlying causes and factors of systemic character producing or influencing these differences and inequalities. In addition of identifying mechanisms or activities that will (i) address the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men, the action must (ii) challenge existing discriminatory policies and practices and influence radical change in social, economic, and political contexts supporting or influencing such policies and practices.



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- Submitted by national/grassroot organizations;
- Coming from or with a focus on regions that were underrepresented under the GMDF's first Call for Partnerships (Arab States, Asia and the Pacific);
- Coming from or with a focus on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- Implementing innovative approaches (using new or novel ideas and approaches to solve existing problems);
- Relying on or enhancing collaboration between CSO and journalists' networks focused on bolstering journalists' protection and/or improving their access to legal assistance;
- Based on links with existing networks, as well as with broader national or regional initiatives or projects.

4.3.2. Duration of the Action

The activities described in the partnership proposal must cover a **minimum 6 months and a maximum 18 months** of implementation.

4.3.3. Budget of the Project

Candidate partners must fill out the **GMDF Project Budget template** (Annex 4), expressing the cost of the proposed project **in US Dollars**.

The purpose of the budget is to estimate costs as realistically as possible. The budget should be prepared in sufficient detail to justify resource requirements, demonstrate cost-effectiveness and, as far as practicable, provide a breakdown of the resource requirements corresponding to the periods for which cash transfers will be made to the implementation partner (see "Contracting Process and Project Implementation" below).

The proposed budget will be the basis of the funding agreement if a grant is awarded. Nevertheless, the budget proposed by the candidate partner may undergo the streamlining or other adjustments requested by UNESCO following the preselection of a partnership proposal. As such, the preselection of a partnership proposal does not necessarily entail the approval of the entire proposed budget. UNESCO reserves the right to negotiate the budget with preselected partners prior to the signature of the *Implementation Partners Agreement*, to ensure value for money.

Eligible Costs

Candidate partners must make sure every activity and cost item are included in the budget, including costs that will be part of their contribution to the project (see "Partner's Contribution" below). Items that are not included in the approved budget will not be covered.

Budgets should be prepared for each activity and further broken down by budget line. Any cost which does not have the necessary breakdown will not be accepted.

Budgets must **only include direct costs** relevant to the attainment of the project objectives. Indirect, overhead or administrative costs (office costs, bank fees, monitoring and reporting costs, etc.) associated with the project should be borne by the implementation partner, and cannot be supported by the GMDF.

The budget must allocate a **minimum 5%** of the total budget (including both the GMDF's and the candidate partner's contribution) **to communication and visibility actions**, in order to generate and ensure the visibility of the project among potential beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders.

Cost breakdown must be deemed reasonable and fair by UNESCO in comparison with prevailing market trends, and **represent value for money**¹⁰.

While budgets should be as accurate as possible, it is recognized that a budget is essentially a plan and that variances occur during implementation. Consequently, a variation of up to 10% in actual expenditure on budget lines may be considered.

Only costs **incurred during the duration of the action** as specified in the corresponding *Implementation Partners Agreement* are eligible. Costs incurred prior to the start date of the contract will not be supported by the GMDF (no retroactivity).

All costs of the project must be recorded in the accounting records of the implementation partner and included in the certified financial report that will be submitted at the end of the contract period (see "Contracting Process and Project Implementation" below).

Partner's Contribution

An *Implementation Partners Agreement* (IPA) goes beyond the sole delivery of a remunerated service, as normally covered by a contract for services/goods/works. This **implies building a partnership** across the different aspects of the action, with both parties mutually benefitting from such an arrangement.

One of the main features of an IPA is the "**added value**" brought by the partner, which includes a monetary or in-kind contribution to the project (beyond the sole delivery of a service). Consequently, all partners are expected to make a financial contribution (monetary or in-kind) **equivalent to at least 5% of the total budget** of the project, including direct costs relevant to the attainment of the project's objectives.

Co-Financing by Other Sources of External Funding

In addition to the grant requested under the GMDF, the action proposed in the partnership proposal may be partially supported by financial contributions from third parties.

V. WHAT IS THE INDICATIVE BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR THIS CALL?

The total amount earmarked for the co-financing of projects under this Call is estimated at **USD \$1,000,000**. This amount will be distributed among the proposals with the highest evaluation score (estimated number of grants: 35).

¹⁰ "Value for money" refers to the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes. Value for money is not about achieving the lowest initial cost. Assessing value for money involves a combination of economy (keeping inputs –human and financial resources– as lean as possible); efficiency (how well inputs are converted to outputs to be transferred to the beneficiaries); and effectiveness (keeping the quality of the outputs as high as possible in order to have the greatest possible outcome and impact).

The size of the grants that will be distributed under this Call will go from a minimum **USD \$15,000** up to a maximum **USD \$35,000**. The amount requested by candidate partners should be commensurate with their entities' proven administrative and financial management capabilities.

UNESCO reserves the right not to distribute all the funds available, as well as the right to grant the total or only part of the funding requested by candidate partners.

Please note that the award of a grant does not establish an entitlement for subsequent years.

No grant may be awarded retroactively for actions already completed.

Grant funds may only be spent on the activities defined in the corresponding *Implementation Partners Agreement* (see "Contracting Process and Project Implementation" below).

The GMDF **will not provide funding** for activities that are not directly in line with Output 2, Output 3, and/or Output 4 of the Fund.

VI. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Candidate partners should submit their partnership proposals **by 15 June 2021 at 23:59 (CET)**.

In order to assess the partnership proposals submitted under this Call, UNESCO shall apply the following procedure:

Preliminary Assessment

- Admissibility Check (see Admissibility Requirements under section IV above).
- Eligibility Check (see Eligibility Requirements under section IV above).

Evaluation of Proposals

Project selection will be carried out:

- ✓ In adherence with UNESCO rules, regulations and applicable procedures;
- ✓ Based on three principles: *Best Value for Money; Fairness, Integrity, and Transparency; and Economy and Effectiveness.*

Best Value for Money: UNESCO shall accept partnership proposals that effectively meet UNESCO's requirements (as stated on this Call) based on an integrated assessment of the elements of the proposal (including technical, organizational, and pricing factors) in light of their relative importance (i.e., life-cycle costs and benefits, reliability, quality, experience, reputation, past performance, cost/fee realism and reasonableness). UNESCO's parameters also include social and environmental factors, as well as the strategic objectives of the GMDF. To ensure value for money, the Call and the related evaluation and selection processes shall maximize competition, ensure impartial and comprehensive evaluation of proposals, and ensure the selection of candidate partners whose proposals have the highest degree of relevance, realism and whose performance is expected to best meet UNESCO's standards, specifications, statement of works and terms of reference.

Fairness, Integrity and Transparency: Fairness refers to being reasonable as well as impartial, and treating all the same way. Integrity relates to aspects of personal and institutional behavior, including



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qualities such as honesty, truthfulness, impartiality, and incorruptibility. Transparency, the unimpeded visibility and openness of all transactions, ensures that all information on policies, procedures, opportunities and processes are clearly defined and made widely known and available. A transparent system increases the possibility of detecting any deviations from fair and equal treatment, and therefore makes such deviations less likely to occur. Transparency thus protects the integrity of the process and the interests of UNESCO. UNESCO shall be responsible for protecting the integrity of the process and maintaining fairness in its treatment of all potential grantees. Sound selection of grantees (i.e., openness of the process; probity; complete and accurate records; accountability; confidentiality) shall be guaranteed through rules and procedures that are attainable and unambiguous.

Economy and Effectiveness: Economy and Effectiveness refer to the extent to which UNESCO is successful in carrying out its operations, ensuring the right quantity and quality, at the right time, at the right price and to the right place, and also the extent to which the overall costs are minimized in the interest of the overall budget of the Organization. Through this principle, UNESCO shall protect the interests of the Member States and donors in the selection of candidate partners. Effectiveness helps ensure the interest of the beneficiaries is met through the selection of candidate partners that can fulfil their needs.

Proposals are evaluated and scored against an evaluation grid on a scale from 0 to 5 points (half scores may be given):

- 0 – Proposal fails to address the criteria or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
- 1 – Poor. The proposal does not address the criteria adequately or contains serious flaws that cannot be corrected without amending a significant part of the proposal.
- 2 – Fair. The proposal broadly addresses the overall criteria, but it presents major weaknesses or shortcomings that steer it away from the key objectives of the GMDF.
- 3 – Good. The proposal covers well most elements of the criteria and includes certain activities/objectives that align with the objectives of the GMDF, but there are significant shortcomings that it may or may not be possible to address satisfactorily during the streamlining phase.
- 4 – Very good. The proposal satisfactorily covers all relevant elements of the criteria, though a small number of shortcomings will require streamlining to ensure its full alignment with the objectives of the GMDF.
- 5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant elements of the criteria and is fully aligned with the objectives of the GMDF. Shortcomings are very minor and can be easily rectified or adjusted during the streamlining phase.

Partnership proposals shall be preselected out of those having obtained the highest total score on the basis of the following **evaluation grid**:

EVALUATION GRID		
CATEGORY	CRITERIA	SCORE
Partnership Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Contribution to GMDF Outputs✓ Specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic objective(s)✓ Time-bound implementation (18 months maximum)✓ Operational and technical feasibility	5 points



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Alignment of implementation modalities with objective(s) ✓ SWOT analysis ✓ Human rights-based approach throughout development and implementation ✓ Gender mainstreaming ✓ Abiding with international standards on freedom of expression and safety of journalists ✓ Alignment with UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity ✓ Special Features: Priority and Special Attention ✓ Inputs from UNESCO Field Offices 	
Financial Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eligible costs only ✓ Reasonability of costs vs. local standards (financial feasibility) ✓ <i>Best Value for Money</i> ✓ Partner 'added value' 	5 points
Partner Capacity	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sound financial status ✓ Managerial competencies ✓ Record-keeping competencies ✓ Capacity to manage the volume of funds ✓ Capacity to implement activities efficiently and effectively ✓ Capacity to operate in target countries/areas ✓ Appropriate internal control procedures ✓ Commitment to human rights, freedom of expression and gender equality ✓ Planning, monitoring, evaluation ✓ Staff 	5 points
Total (Maximum) Score		15 points

Preselection of Proposals

The Selection Committee shall draw up a ranked list of partnership proposals, and preselect for funding those with the highest total score. UNESCO shall place the highest-ranked non selected partnership proposals in a waitlist of proposals that may be offered funding if a higher-scoring project does not go ahead or additional funds become available. UNESCO shall inform candidate partners whose proposal is placed on the waitlist and specify a date for the confirmation of the grant.

UNESCO shall also inform candidate partners of the rejection or ineligibility of their proposal.

The results of the selection process shall be notified to all candidate partners via email.



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VII. CONTRACTING PROCESS AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

FROM EVALUATION TO THE SIGNATURE OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS AGREEMENT



7.1. DEFINITION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE & STREAMLINING OF ACTIVITIES/BUDGET

Following the preselection¹¹ of a candidate partner, UNESCO shall invite them to start preparations for the streamlining, where necessary, and/or the negotiations of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the *Implementation Partners Agreement* (IPA) that shall be drawn up between the Organization and the preselected partner, in accordance with UNESCO's administrative rules and regulations.

The full terms and conditions of the IPAs are available in Annex 4 (Implementation Partners' Agreement template).

If there are unreasonable delays in the finalization of the IPA through no fault of UNESCO, or if it is not possible to reach an agreement on the ToRs and/or other contents of the IPA, the grant offer may be withdrawn and the grant awarded to a different candidate partner.

7.2. DELIVERABLES AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The total amount of the GMDF contribution shall be transferred to selected implementation partners in at least **three separate instalments**:

- An **initial payment** equivalent to up to 33% of the total grant, to be paid to the partner within the first month of the contract, against the submission (and approval by UNESCO) of an inception report.
- An **interim payment** equivalent to roughly 47% of the total grant, to be paid to the partner within the third month of the contract against the submission (and approval by UNESCO) of an interim progress narrative report, containing relevant information on the progress of the action (key milestones or achievements of the first three months of the project; status of the delivery of outputs, implementation of activities –and communication plan– and achievement of the outcomes, assessing progress against the initial workplan; significant constraints or challenges encountered; other elements or factors that have been significant to the project's implementation).

¹¹ For the purposes of this Call, "preselected partners" are those submitting the highest-ranked partnership proposal and invited to engage in negotiations with UNESCO to streamline the proposed budget and activities and/or define the Terms of Reference of an *Implementation Partners Agreement*, prior to the approval and signature of the contract.

- A **final payment** equivalent to roughly 20% of the total grant, to be paid within the month following the end of the contract, against the submission (and approval by UNESCO) of a final narrative report¹² and a certified financial report¹³.

All payments of the contract shall depend upon the certification, by the UNESCO Officer responsible for the IPA, of the partner's satisfactory performance of the work preceding the payment date of each instalment.

Partners shall submit a signed invoice or request for payment for each instalment of the contract. All instalments shall be paid in US Dollars.

7.3. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

To maximize the visibility and impact of the action and the GMDF, projects should have a clear and strong strategy for the communication of their activities and results. The partnership proposal must include a detailed communication plan, indicating its key objectives, target audience(s), key messages, and delivery methods.

VIII. HOW CAN MY ORGANIZATION SUBMIT A PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL?

All the information required to prepare your partnership proposal is available on the UN Global Marketplace website (UNGM), as well as on the Global Media Defence Fund [webpage](#) (under "Second Call for Partnerships").

CHECKLIST: All candidate partners must submit the following **forms and supporting documents**:

1. Application Form (signature required).
2. Budget template, including the logo of the candidate partner and the signature of the authorized representative at the bottom (signature required).
3. UNESCO Partner Identification Form (signature required).
4. Official Certificate of Legal Status (if the certificate is available in a language other than English and French, the candidate partner must also submit a certified translation).
5. Financial Statements (including the balance sheet, the income and expenses account and the annexes) of the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed, signed and

¹² A final narrative report summarizing all actions undertaken during the duration of the IPA. The report will provide an analysis of the progress achieved against targets within given time, quantity, quality and budget constraints: in other words, an analytical assessment of project performance in terms of progress towards the achievement of results in terms of the project's outcomes, the delivery of outputs and the implementation of activities, including references to challenges in implementation, remedial actions and lessons learned; a proposal on the next steps or actions to go beyond the objectives of the project; and information on how gender equality considerations were included throughout the development and implementation of the project, providing data disaggregated by gender.

¹³ All expenditure reports should be certified by an authorized official from the partner institution attesting that the reported expenditures are accurate, that the resources have been used in accordance with budget provisions and the *Implementation Partners Agreement's* terms and conditions, and that all expenditures are supported by relevant documents. UNESCO will only accept expenditures that are in line with the approved budget. The financial report must be certified by the partner's own financial authority (comptroller or equivalent), or external auditor of the partner.

certified by the candidate partner's own financial authority (comptroller or equivalent) and audited, where applicable (signature required).

6. A Report of the entity's annual activities, covering the activities implemented during the last year (as a means of attesting the candidate partners' professional competencies and appropriate qualifications).
7. Curriculum Vitae (CV) or résumé of key personnel that is or will be involved in the implementation of the project.

Only proposals that fulfill the eligibility criteria will be considered for a grant.

Please note that all proposals must be submitted either **in English or in French**, without exception.

In order to **submit** a partnership proposal, please forward the filled (and signed, where required) forms and supporting documents to the following email address: gmdf@unesco.org. All documents must be shared in a readable format (Word or PDF for the forms, PDF or JPG for the supporting documents). No other method of submission will be accepted.

IX. FAQ: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I submit a proposal covering Output 1 of the GMDF?

No. This Call for Partnerships only concerns Output 2, Output 3 and Output 4 of the Fund. Any activities that help advance **Output 1 of the GMDF**—implemented by the IBAHRI, the Media Freedom Coalition's Consultative Network and other implementation partners—are thus excluded from this Call.

2. Does the GMDF support projects focused on advocacy or trainings for journalists?

The GMDF does not support **advocacy and capacity-building activities** (trainings, workshops...) as stand-alone activities, but only as complementary activities for the implementation of activities that directly contribute to advancing at least one of the GMDF Outputs mentioned above.

3. Does Output 3 of the Fund support any kind of investigative journalism?

No. Output 3 only supports the type of investigative journalism that may effectively contribute to reducing impunity and enhancing the safety of those conducting this line of work.

4. Can I submit a proposal covering more than one Output, or covering all three?

Yes. Partnership proposals may cover one single Output, two, or all three. This does not affect the evaluation and/or scoring of the proposal.

Nevertheless, candidate partners are advised to ensure the cohesiveness of the proposed actions.

5. Can more than one organization pair up in a joint proposal?

Yes. UNESCO encourages partnerships amongst CSOs for the development and implementation of projects under the GMDF, as the complexity of safety of journalists and media freedom issues calls for the concerted action of stakeholders. Collaboration and collective actions will enable partners to leverage upon the skills, knowledge, expertise, and capacities of one another, and enhance the impact of the action.

However, please note that partnership proposals can only be submitted by one entity (the lead applicant), which shall also stand as UNESCO's counterpart under the corresponding Implementation Partners Agreement. This means that only the lead applicant may be the recipient of the GMDF funding awarded under this Call, and thus responsible vis-à-vis UNESCO for such funds.

Candidate partners may also collaborate with other CSOs on specific activities.

If your organization expects to pair up with others, you will be asked to describe the partnership scheme in the Application Form. There is no limit of participating partners in a certain project.

6. Our organization has been legally incorporated for less than two years, though it has been active for significantly longer. Are we able to submit a partnership proposal?

No. According to this Call's eligibility criteria, candidate partners must have been active and registered as not-for-profit entities for at least two years. If your organization does not meet this requirement, it is not an eligible candidate under this Call for Partnerships.

An organization that does not meet this eligibility requirement may pair up with a mentor-partner CSO meeting all eligibility requirements for the purposes of submitting a joint partnership proposal. Nevertheless, the conditions mentioned under Question 5. above still apply.

7. Can a project be implemented in more than one target country?

Yes. A single partnership proposal may target more than one country, as the GMDF supports projects with a local, regional, and/or international geographic scope. Where necessary, the overall approach and activities must be properly tailored to the context of each country.

8. Is it possible for an organization to submit more than one partnership proposal?

No. A candidate partner may only submit a single proposal as lead applicant.

Candidate partners cannot submit a partnership proposal and take part in another joint proposal under the same Call.

9. Is it possible to subcontract work?

Yes, but subcontracting (the externalization of specific tasks or activities which are part of the action described in the partnership proposal and which cannot be performed by the implementing partner itself) must satisfy the following conditions:

- It may only cover the implementation of a limited part of the action: subcontracting costs cannot exceed 33% of the total budget of the project (including both the partner's and GMDF's contributions).
- It must be justified and necessary vis-à-vis the nature of the action and its implementation.
- It must be clearly stated in the partnership proposal (Application Form) and budget.

Where the implementation of the action requires subcontracting, implementation partners must award the contract to the bid offering the best value for money, avoiding conflicts of interests and retaining the documentation for the purposes of the final financial report (see "Contracting Process and Project Implementation" above).



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10. Who does UNESCO consider as “journalists” for the purposes of this Call?

The term “journalists” must be understood from a broad functional perspective, including all media workers and support staff, community media workers, cartoonists, and citizen journalists.

11. Is it possible to submit a partnership proposal specifically addressing issues affecting women journalists, or targeting only women journalists as beneficiaries?

Yes. In fact, the submission of partnership proposals focused on women journalists is strongly encouraged, as the Global Media Defence Fund gives preference (i.e. additional score) to projects addressing the specific threats to the safety of women journalists online and offline.

12. Will UNESCO award additional grants after the amount of the global indicative envelope has been fully distributed?

UNESCO cannot commit to awarding additional grants after the global indicative envelope has been distributed. The Organization shall place the highest-ranked non selected partnership proposals in a waitlist of proposals that may be offered funding if a higher-scoring project does not go ahead or additional funds become available.

13. Who will evaluate the partnership proposals?

A first screening will be carried out by the CI/FEJ Section at UNESCO to check the proposals’ admissibility and eligibility. Eligible partnership proposals will then undergo a technical and financial review that will be carried out by a Selection Committee.