

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**GLOBAL MEDIA DEFENCE FUND**

**THEMATIC CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS:**

**DEFENDING ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM**

**INDEX:**

1. The Global Media Defence Fund
2. Actions supported under this Thematic Call
3. Admissibility and Eligibility Criteria
4. Indicative Budget available for this Call
5. Evaluation and Selection Process
6. Contracting Process and Project Implementation
7. Submission of Partnership Proposals

**I. THE GLOBAL MEDIA DEFENCE FUND**

Established in 2019 within the framework of the *Global Campaign for Media Freedom* and the overall umbrella of the [UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](https://www.unesco.org/en/safety-journalists/un-plan-action) (hereinafter “the UN Plan of Action”) –and the [recommendations](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384828?posInSet=5&queryId=e5f6ce81-6447-4acc-992c-bd78ff30a68b) for an upscaled implementation–, the Global Media Defence Fund (hereinafter “GMDF” or “the Fund”) is a UNESCO Multi-Partner Trust Fund which supports local, regional, and global projects contributing to bolstering journalists’ legal protection and enhancing media freedom.

The GMDF contributes to creating a free and safer environment for journalists to undertake their work through four key approaches or Outputs:

* Output 1: Fostering international legal cooperation, as well as the sharing and implementation of good practices for promoting the defense of journalists under attack and addressing impunity for attacks against them.
* Output 2: Reinforcing the operationalization of national safety 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 against them.
* Output 3: Supporting investigative journalism that contributes to reduced impunity for crimes against journalists by holding the justice system accountable and by pursuing investigative work that risks being censored when journalists are attacked, imprisoned, or murdered; and enhances the safety of those conducting this line of work.
* Output 4: Enhancing structures for fostering strategic litigation in order to protect national and regional environments where the legal frameworks are conducive to an independent, free, and plural media ecosystems.

Under **Output 2, Output 3 and Output 4** of the Fund, UNESCO seeks partnerships with not-for-profit organizations (including but not limited to non-governmental organizations, foundations, professional associations, academic institutions, and intergovernmental organizations, among many others) seeking to undertake or upscale local, regional, and/or global initiatives that, in line with international human rights standards, will contribute to advancing at least one of these Outputs. Partner organizations are selected through competitive Calls for Partnerships.

For more information about the Fund, its Outputs, and its impact, please visit the GMDF [webpage](https://www.unesco.org/en/global-media-defence-fund?hub=67808). The Fund’s latest narrative report, covering the period between 2020 and 2024, can be found [here](https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2024/07/Global%20Media%20Defence%20Fund%20report%20%282020-2024%29.pdf?hub=67808).

The GMDF complements and synergizes with actions implemented under UNESCO’s regular programme and other extra-budgetary funding modalities supporting the Organization’s work on freedom of expression and safety of journalists, such as the [Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP)](https://www.unesco.org/en/multi-donor-programme-freedom-expression-and-safety-journalists), the [International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)](https://www.unesco.org/fr/international-programme-development-communication), as well as single-donor UNESCO Funds-In-Trust projects, among many other initiatives. Coordination on complementarities and/or synergies is actively sought out among the projects implemented with UNESCO/GMDF support, including the implementation of measures to avoid any potential overlaps and/or the duplication of activities.

**II. ACTIONS SUPPORTED UNDER THIS THEMATIC CALL**

**Background**

Environmental journalism plays a key role in responding to the global environmental crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Reporters covering environmental issues not only enable citizens’ access to reliable information on these crises, contributing to the decision-making process related to environmental policies and holding duty bearers accountable, but also document and tell the stories of the marginalized communities who carry the burden of a changing climate, and help raise awareness among disengaged audiences who believe the climate crisis does not affect them.

Environmental journalism, however, is a dangerous field. Journalists and communicators covering environmental issues face many threats and forms of violence due to the sensitive nature of their reporting. These range from physical violence, surveillance, pressures, or intimidation by national and transnational companies that could be affected by their activities, the imposition of official controls and the pernicious use of the State apparatus (administrative and judicial), as well as the resort to legal attacks – based on charges such as criminal and civil defamation, public order disruption, terrorism, hate speech, and dissemination of fake news – meant to silence critical environmental reporting.

A UNESCO [policy brief](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389501) published on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day 2024 (3 May 2024) highlighted the risks faced by journalists covering environmental issues. The study found that:

* A total of 44 journalists reporting on environmental issues have been killed in the past 15 years, with only five cases resulting in convictions, according to UNESCO’s Observatory of Killed Journalists. At least 24 journalists survived murder attempts over that same period.
* At least 749 journalists, groups of journalists and news outlets reporting on environmental issues have been attacked in 89 countries since 2009, according to the detailed review of various data sources. These journalists and outlets covered a wide array of stories, from climate change causes, illegal mining, deforestation and fossil fuels, to issues specific to their communities like agribusiness, land grabs, mega-infrastructure projects, and the aftermath of extreme weather events.
* Over 300 attacks occurred in the past five years, marking a 42% increase from the preceding five-year period. This surge is attributed to a rise in physical attacks like assaults, arrests and harassment, and legal actions including defamation lawsuits and criminal prosecutions.
* State actors, such as police, military forces, government officials and employees, have committed at least half of the 749 attacks. Private actors, including extractive industry companies, criminal groups, protesters and local communities, are responsible for at least a quarter of these attacks.
* Since 2009, at least 204 journalists and news outlets covering environmental issues have faced legal attacks. Governments filed criminal charges against 93 of them, the most common type of legal attack. Moreover, 39 journalists have been imprisoned, primarily in Asia and the Pacific, in connection to their environmental reporting. Defamation lawsuits are also common with at least 63 cases, predominantly in Europe and North America.
* A survey carried out by UNESCO and the International Federation of Journalists among 900 journalists from 130 countries in March 2024 supported these trends. It showed that over 70% of journalists surveyed reported being subject to attacks, threats or pressure while covering environmental issues. Out of all the journalists reporting being subject to attacks while reporting on environmental issues, a quarter said they had been legally attacked through i.e. lawsuits against public participation or defamation allegations.

These threats weaken the role of journalists as watchdogs of democracy and reduce their ability to hold the powerful to account; while censorship can erode people’s trust in journalism and hamper citizens’ access to verified information, creating a vacuum conducive to the proliferation of dis-/misinformation and affecting the full exercise of the right to freedom of expression of all.

**A thematic Call with a focus on defending environmental journalism**

This Call for Partnerships has a special focus on defending environmental journalism, and aims to advance the UNESCO Global Roadmap for Information as a public good in the face of the environmental crisis. The Roadmap seeks to address various aspects relevant to promoting the safety of journalists working on the coverage of environmental issues, as well as to advance information integrity, including by countering disinformation on climate change.

Announced at the 2024 World Press Freedom Day Conference in Santiago de Chile, the Roadmap looks at the roles that governments, the media, academia and researchers, the culture sector, civil society, and digital platforms can play to ensure:

1. The economic viability of environmental journalism, and provide safety measures;
2. The safety and legal defense of environmental journalists;
3. The access to public environmental information;
4. Stronger media institutions in climate action, disaster preparedness and response;
5. A human rights-based and multistakeholder approach to the governance of digital platforms;
6. Media and information literacy capacities that enable people to recognize and value, as well as defend and demand journalism as a vital part of information as a public good.

One of the key goals of the Roadmap is to enhance legal support and defense for journalists, particularly to combat Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). This includes support to legal professionals, civil society organizations, and investigative journalists who are dedicated to addressing environmental issues – including climate change.

Another goal of the Roadmap is to support environmental journalists by funding investigative journalism focused on crimes against them, and strengthening the implementation of the UN Plan of Action by upscaling the focus on addressing specific aspects of violence against journalists and media outlets reporting on environmental issues.

**The objective of this thematic Call for Partnerships is providing financial support to local, regional, and global projects that, in line with international standards, contribute to defending environmental journalism by bolstering the legal protection of environmental journalists and/or reducing impunity related to cases of violence, threats and attacks against them, in line with at least one of the following GMDF Outputs:**

**OUTPUT 2**

Under Output 2, the GMDF seeks to support projects aimed at ensuring environmental journalists’ rapid access to legal assistance, bolstering their defense and enhancing their safety.

Projects supporting Output 2 may implement different activities, including but not limited to:

* Establishing, operationalizing and/or reinforcing mechanisms (legal units, legal protection teams, legal helplines, digital aid platforms) to provide rapid, specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance (including legal advice, legal representation, etc.) to journalists and/or media outlets facing attacks, threats, pressures, restrictions, and/or legal proceedings related to their reporting on environmental issues;
* Fostering the establishment of and/or establishing and operationalizing sustainable media lawyers’ networks, legal aid organizations, or other initiatives aiming at enhancing environmental journalists’ access to specialized legal assistance;
* Facilitating environmental journalists’ access to verified, practical information to enhance their legal protection, taking into account the gendered nature of the threats/attacks against them, as well as the particularities of their local legal and media environments and the specific risks and challenges they face due to the sensitive nature of their work;
* Setting up and operationalizing sustainable alert or warning mechanisms to identify environmental journalists in need of legal defense, and actively alerting the judiciary and security forces in charge of protection of the threats/attacks against them;
* Establishing, operationalizing, and coordinating peer support networks to connect environmental journalists in need of legal assistance with relevant organizations providing legal services to journalists in a manner that effectively enhances the latter’s legal protection.

**OUTPUT 3**

Under Output 3, the Fund seeks to support investigative journalism that contributes to a) reduced impunity for crimes against environmental journalists and b) enhancing the safety of those conducting this line of work by holding the justice system accountable and by pursuing investigative work that risks being censored when environmental journalists are attacked, imprisoned, or murdered.

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

* Carrying out in-depth journalistic investigations on (specific) cases of violence against environmental journalists with the aim of ensuring judicial follow-up and holding perpetrators and duty bearers accountable;
* Continuing investigative work that risks being terminated or censored when environmental journalists are attacked, murdered, threatened, arbitrarily imprisoned, or have otherwise been deterred or impeded from further pursuing it, bringing these stories to light and widely disseminating them (“Arizona Projects”);
* Setting up, operationalizing, and coordinating the work of formal or informal networks of investigative journalists or initiatives aimed at investigating cases of violence, threats, and attacks against environmental reporters;
* Monitoring, documenting and broadly exposing cases of threats and/or attacks against environmental journalists, drawing awareness to the investigative work that risks being terminated or censored as a result and actively and contributing to ensuring both judicial follow up and accountability for these cases.

**OUTPUT 4**

Under Output 4, the GMDF seeks to support strategic litigation that will contribute to enhancing the legal protection of environmental journalists.

Strategic litigation consists in identifying and pursuing legal action in cases with significative strategic potential before national, regional and/or international courts, in line with international human rights standards, as part of a strategy to reinforce the legal protection of environmental journalists. It involves selecting and bringing a case to a court of law with an aim that goes beyond the individual case, by contributing to:

* Creating progressive jurisprudence by setting innovative legal precedents related to key and emerging challenges faced by environmental journalists, in line with international human rights standards;
* Ensuring that national legislation and international human rights standards on freedom of expression and safety of journalists are correctly interpreted and enforced in cases involving environmental journalists;
* Prompting or triggering reforms in national and regional legislation, policy and institutional practices, in line with international human rights standards, that could enhance the protection of environmental journalists;
* Seeking remedial action for redress and reparation in cases related to journalists and/or media outlets victims of threats, attacks, restrictions or pressures for reporting on environmental issues, in line with international human rights standards.

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

* Engaging in strategic legal proceedings related to the investigation, prosecution, and sanction of cases involving violations against environmental journalists before national, regional, and/or international courts, with the aim of achieving the above (creating progressive jurisprudence, prompting or triggering reforms related to legislation, policy or practice, etc.);
* Cases supporting interventions through relevant UN special procedures mechanisms in response to cases of violence against environmental journalists are also considered as strategic litigation for the purposes of this Output;
* Preparing and submitting *amicus curiae* interventions in strategic cases related to journalists and/or media outlets facing threats, attacks, undue or excessive restrictions, or pressures for reporting on environmental issues, in line with international human rights standards;
* Enabling, promoting, and reinforcing legal collaboration between local, regional and international experts to provide expert legal guidance on cases with strategic potential involving environmental journalists and support further action to safeguard the right to freedom of expression and press freedom.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

* All projects must directly contribute to advancing at least one of the Outputs covered by this Call (Output 2, Output 3, Output 4);
* Output 1 of the GMDF is not targeted by this Call;
* The partnership proposal should be aligned with the thematic focus of this Call for Partnerships (bolstering the legal protection of environmental journalists and/or reducing impunity related to cases of violence, threats and attacks against them);
* Advocacy and awareness-raising activities are not a priority under the GMDF, but may (only) be supported as complementary activities to the main action or as part of a project’s communication and visibility strategy.

**III. ADMISSIBILITY AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

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

**3.1. ADMISSIBILITY**

Admissibility conditions are as follows:

* The proposal (Application Form and Budget) and supporting documents must be submitted **via email** to [gmdf@unesco.org](mailto:gmdf@unesco.org) by the set **deadline** (Friday 18 October 2024, 23:59 GMT+2);
* The proposal submitted **must be complete and in the right format** (see required forms, documents and format under section VII below);
* The proposal and supporting documents **must be signed and dated**, **where required**, by the authorized representative of the candidate partner.

**3.2. ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility conditions are as follows:

**3.2.1. ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES**

Candidate implementation partners must comply with the following criteria:

1. **Legal Status:**

This Call for Partnerships is open to **not-for-profit entities only** (non-governmental organizations, foundations, professional associations, academic institutions, and intergovernmental organizations, among many others). As defined in the System of National Accounts elaborated by the United Nations Statistics Division, non-profit institutions are legal or social entities created for the purpose of producing goods and services whose status does not permit them to be a source of income, profit or other financial gain for the units that establish, control or finance them.

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 incorporated non-profit organizations with less than two years of activities as legally registered entities are not eligible for funding.

1. **General Eligibility:**

* Be able to make an effective contribution to the achievement of UNESCO’s objectives, in conformity with the principles proclaimed in [UNESCO’s Constitution](https://unesco.sharepoint.com/sites/ADM-Manual/SupportingDocumentsEn/Basic_Texts_2018.pdf#page=6);
* Display a commitment to defend and respect human rights, freedom of expression and gender equality;
* Provide ‘added value’ in terms of a monetary or in-kind contribution (the latter, quantified): candidate partners must be able to contribute at least five percent of the total budget of the project, which must include direct costs relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the action (and not only costs related to the general operation of their organization – see “Eligible Costs” below for more detailed information);
* Must not appear on the [Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List](https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/un-sc-consolidated-list), nor on the United Nations Global Marketplace vendor ineligibility list.

1. **Capacity:**

* Have a sound financial status: applicants must prove they have stable and sufficient sources of funding to maintain their activities throughout the project period;
* Have appropriate internal control procedures;
* Demonstrate they possess adequate facilities and have the capacity to manage the volume of funds and to implement the agreed-upon activities in an efficient and effective manner, as well as participate in planning, monitoring, and assurance activities;
* Demonstrate their capacity to operate in the target areas;
* Display managerial and record-keeping competencies, as well as permanent staff and the ability to manage and support staff in the field (where applicable).

Preference will be given to projects designed and implemented predominantly by local/grassroot partners, including those rooted within indigenous communities.

Collaborative or coalition-based initiatives are strongly encouraged, as the complexity of safety of journalists and media freedom issues – particularly those related to environmental reporting – calls for the concerted action of stakeholders. 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 partnership agreement (“Implementation Partners’ Agreement”).

Applicants who have already been awarded funding under a previous Call for Partnerships of the GMDF, UNESCO’s regular program or under other extra-budgetary modalities (such as the [International Programme for the Development of Communication](https://www.unesco.org/en/international-programme-development-communication) or the [Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists](https://www.unesco.org/en/multi-donor-programme-freedom-expression-and-safety-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.

**3.2.2. ELIGIBLE PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS**

**BASIC REQUIREMENTS**

**1. Technical Proposal (Application Form):** In order for a partnership proposal to be eligible, candidate organizations must have completed every section of the Application Form (Annex 3) in full.

Partnership proposals must comply with the following criteria:

* *Alignment with GMDF Outputs:*The objectives of the proposed action must contribute to advancing at least one of the GMDF Outputs covered by this Call.
* *Thematic Focus:*The partnership proposal should be aligned with the thematic focus of this Call for Partnerships (bolstering the legal protection of environmental journalists and/or reducing impunity related to cases of violence, threats and attacks against them).
* *S.M.A.R.T. and Feasible Project Objectives:* The objective(s) of the action must be S.M.A.R.T., as well as operationally, technically, and financially feasible[[1]](#footnote-1). The proposed implementation modalities must effectively and efficiently contribute to the achievement of the objective(s) of the action.
* *Human Rights-Based Approach:* The proposed actions must be developed and implemented on the basis of a human rights-based approach, which means that they must be based on international human rights standards, must be directed to promoting and protecting human rights, and must ensure the involvement of those who are most marginalized, excluded or discriminated against.

All projects 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.

* *Gender Equality:* All partnership proposals seeking funding from the GMDF must mainstream gender throughout the development and implementation of the action they propose.

Ensuring the equal participation of people of women, men and people of other gender identities in decision-making and as project beneficiaries is a first step, but that does not satisfy the gender mainstreaming requirement. In order to achieve this, a gender equality perspective in the identification of the issues, concerns, and needs of the beneficiaries, as well as in the definition of the ways to address them.

All actions supported by the GMDF must:

* + Actively attend to the specific risks faced by women journalists and media professionals of other gender identities in the conduct of their work –including sexual and gender-based discrimination and violence, intimidation, and harassment, both online and offline– when putting in place measures to address the safety of journalists;
  + Seek gender equality and empowerment of women and people of other gender identities in the project team and in the implementation of the project activities;
  + Where possible, gather, monitor and analyze data and information in a gender-disaggregated manner to highlight the specific risks faced by women journalists and people of other gender identities in the exercise of their work, as well as assess the different impact of the action on women, men and other gender identities.
* *Duration of the Action:* The proposed action should cover a minimum of six months and a maximum of 18 months of implementation. Project duration corresponds to the period within which the project costs incur and project activities happen.
* *Sustainability of the Action:* Partnership proposals should go beyond the level of activities and seek long-term, sustainable change. Concrete measures to ensure the sustainability of the action in the long-term must be proposed.
* *Environmental Sustainability:* In the context of the current global environmental crisis, UNESCO employs its best efforts to ensure that the projects supported under the GMDF do not harm the environment and protect local ecosystems. Implementing partners should integrate sustainability considerations into the procurement processes associated to the implementation of the projects receiving UNESCO/GMDF support.

*UNESCO Global Priorities: Africa and Gender Equality*

In line with UNESCO Global Priorities [Africa](https://www.unesco.org/en/africa) and [Gender Equality](https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality), additional score will be given to partnership proposals meeting at least one of the following criteria:

* Proposals coming from or with a focus on Africa;
* Proposals addressing the specific threats faced by women journalists, targeting women journalists as the main beneficiaries of the action, and/or making a tangible contribution to gender equality through the implementation of their proposed actions.

*Special Attention: LDCs, SIDS and Indigenous Peoples*

Special attention will be given to:

* Projects coming from or with a focus on [Least Developed Countries](https://www.unesco.org/en/ldcs);
* Projects coming from or with a focus on [Small Island Developing States (SIDS)](https://www.unesco.org/en/sids);
* Projects implemented by/with a strong participation of, or with a focus on [Indigenous Peoples](https://www.unesco.org/en/indigenous-peoples).

Special attention will also be given to the use of relevant UNESCO resources and publications, such as the [outcomes](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383337) of the regional and thematic consultations to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity; the [issue briefs](https://www.unesco.org/en/world-media-trends/issue-briefs) in UNESCO’s World Trends Report series; the [results](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383921?posInSet=1&queryId=5cef0198-03e9-440a-b1f9-70d2fdba690f) of the Safety of Women Journalists consultation: 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity; “The Chilling: global trends in online violence against women journalists” [report](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223), and the UNESCO [Guidelines](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000382049) on the Universal Periodic Review for Civil Society Organizations, among many others.

*Global Roadmap for Information as a Public Good in the face of Environmental Crisis*

In addition to the above, additional score will be attributed to partnership proposals with the potential of presenting preliminary results in advance of COP30 (November 2025).

**2. Financial Proposal (Project Budget):** Candidate organizations must fill out the Budget Proposal Template (Annex 4) in US dollars, with one exception: if the candidate partner has a bank account in Euros, the budget should be presented in that currency in the second tab of the said Template (using the [UN Exchange Rate](https://treasury.un.org/operationalrates/OperationalRates.php) for conversion). Budgets that are handwritten and/or in a different format will not be accepted.

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). Cost breakdown must be deemed reasonable and fair by UNESCO in comparison with prevailing market trends, and represent value for money[[2]](#footnote-2). Implementation partners are expected to justify how they will ensure the project costs represent value for money.

The project budget serves as the basis for exercising financial oversight and monitoring resources provided to partners (in addition to workplan and targets set out in the corresponding Implementation Partners’ Agreement). A variation of up to 10% in actual expenditure on budget lines/cost items can be considered acceptable, provided that the overall allocation under the Implementation Partners’ Agreement is not exceeded. Variations of more than 10% in a given budget line/cost item must be submitted to the consideration and approval of UNESCO, and reflected in an addendum to the Agreement.

**Partner’s Contribution**

All partners are expected to make a financial contribution (monetary or in-kind[[3]](#footnote-3)) equivalent to at least five percent of the total project budget, which must include direct costs relevant to the attainment of the objectives of the action (and not only costs related to the general operation of their organization). Salaries can be accepted as part of the partner’s contribution, provided that the organization can explain the role of staff members in the project and the time dedicated to the project.

**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” above). 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 component or cost item. Budgets which do not have the necessary cost breakdown will not be accepted, nor will any cost items lacking the necessary breakdown (i.e. which do not explain how the funds will be spent, such as “Miscellaneous Expenses”)[[4]](#footnote-4).

The budget financed by UNESCO/GMDF should only include direct costs relevant to the achievement of the project objectives. Direct costs are expenses necessary for the implementation of the proposed action, directly attributable to it, arising directly from its implementation, and charged proportionally to actual use under the project (direct budgeting based on activities).

The budget financed by UNESCO/GMDF cannot cover core funding or recurrent costs. Limited coordination costs for the implementation action may be covered, though they should ideally be part of the Partner’s Contribution.

The percentage of the procurement of goods, works or services (i.e. sub-contracting) undertaken under the project cannot exceed 33% of the budget financed by UNESCO/GMDF.

Applicants are encouraged to allocate funding to communication in order to generate and ensure the visibility of the project among potential beneficiaries and relevant stakeholders. An amount equivalent to at least 5% of the project budget is recommended.

**Ineligible Costs**

Costs that are considered ineligible under this Call include, but are not limited to the following:

* Core funding or recurrent costs of an organization (fixed staff salaries, rent, utilities, etc.);
* Indirect, overhead or administrative costs;
* Audit costs;
* Bank fees[[5]](#footnote-5);
* Insurance costs;
* Purchase of equipment, computers, printers, or any other electric device;
* Costs incurred prior to the date of the corresponding Implementation Partners’ Agreement, or after it expires;
* Costs deemed as non-essential to obtain expected results.

|  |
| --- |
| 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. |

**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.

**IV. INDICATIVE BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR THIS CALL**

The total amount earmarked for the co-financing of projects under this Call is estimated at **USD 350 000** at the time of the publication of this Call.This amount will be distributed among the proposals with the highest evaluation score (estimated number of grants: 7-10).

The size of the grants that will be distributed under this Call will range from a minimum **USD 15 000 to a maximum** **USD 50 000**.

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 maybe 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, or which do not respond to the thematic focus of this Call for Partnerships (bolstering the legal protection of environmental journalists and/or reducing impunity related to cases of violence, threats and attacks against them).

**V. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS**

The deadline for submissions under this Call for Partnerships is **Friday 18 October 2024 at 23:59 GMT+2**.

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 III above).
* Eligibility Check (see Eligibility Requirements under section III above).

***Evaluation of Proposals***

Applications will be assessed for preselection on the basis of their merits by a selection committee.

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[[6]](#footnote-6).*

Proposals are evaluated and scored against an evaluation grid consisting of three categories, under each of which a score from 0 to 5 points will be attributed (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 cannot be corrected without amending a significant part of the proposal.
* 3 – Good. The proposal covers well most elements of the criteria, 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 this Call.
* 5 – Excellent. The proposal successfully addresses all relevant elements of the criteria and is fully aligned with the objectives of this Call. Shortcomings are very minor and can be easily rectified or adjusted during the streamlining phase.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EVALUATION GRID | | |
| CATEGORY | CRITERIA | SCORE |
| Technical Proposal | * Alignment with GMDF Outputs * Alignment with the Call’s Thematic Focus * Specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant objective(s) * Time-bound implementation (18 months maximum) * Operational and technical feasibility * Human rights-based approach throughout development and implementation * Abidance by 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 * Gender mainstreaming * Sustainability of the action * Environmental sustainability considerations * Contribution to UNESCO Global Priorities * Special Attention considerations: LDCs, SIDS, Indigenous Peoples * Use of UNESCO resources and publications * Potential for results in advance of COP30 * Inputs from UNESCO Field Offices | 5 points |
| Financial Proposal | * Detailed cost breakdown * Eligible costs only * Justification of resource requirements and value for money * Reasonability of costs vs. local standards (financial feasibility) * Partner ‘added value’ (Partner’s Contribution) | 5 points |
| Partner Capacity | * Ability to contribute to the achievement of UNESCO’s objectives * Commitment to human rights, freedom of expression and gender equality * Sound financial status * Appropriate internal control procedures * Capacity to manage the volume of funds and to implement activities efficiently and effectively * Ability to participate in planning, monitoring, and assurance activities * Capacity to operate in target countries/areas * Managerial competencies and record-keeping competencies * Staff | 5 points |
| Total (Maximum) Score | | **15 points** |

***Preselection of Proposals***

The Selection Committee will draw up a ranked list of partnership proposals, and preselect for funding those with the highest total score. UNESCO may 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 if 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 of their proposal, though it will not be possible to provide individual feedback to each of the candidate partners whose proposals will not be selected for funding.

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

***Indicative Timeline for the Call for Partnerships***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | STAGES | INDICATIVE PERIOD |
| 1 | Launch and publication of the Call | 2 September 2024 |
| 2 | Deadline for submitting partnership proposals | 18 October 2024 |
| 3 | Evaluation and selection period | October – December 2024 |
| 4 | Notification of results to applicants | December 2024 – January 2025 |
| 5 | Launch of the contracting process | January – February 2025 |

**VI. CONTRACTING PROCESS AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

|  |
| --- |
| **FROM ASSESSMENT TO THE SIGNATURE OF AN IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS’ AGREEMENT** |

**6.1. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AGREEMENT & STREAMLINING OF ACTIVITIES/BUDGET**

Following the preselection[[7]](#footnote-7) of a candidate partner, UNESCO shall invite them to start preparations for the streamlining, where necessary, and/or the negotiation 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 the Implementation Partners’ Agreement template (Annex 5, shared for the purposes of enabling candidate partners to familiarize themselves with the standard terms and conditions of an IPA).

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, or if the results of the final review process to be undertaken by the Organization are unfavorable, the grant offer may be withdrawn, and the grant may or may not be awarded to a different candidate organization.

**6.2. DELIVERABLES AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

The total amount of the GMDF contribution shall be transferred to selected implementation partners in instalments (at the beginning of the project, mid-way through the project, and upon project completion), whose payment will depend on the submission and approval of deliverables that will inform UNESCO of actual progress in implementation.

The first instalment of the contract shall not exceed 90 days’ operational needs, paid upon the receipt and approval of an inception report, while the last instalment shall represent at least 10% of the total budget of the project funded by UNESCO; paid upon the receipt and approval of the final narrative[[8]](#footnote-8) and certified financial report[[9]](#footnote-9).

The number of narrative progress reports will be determined during the negotiation of the TORs of the IPA that shall be drawn up between the Organization and the preselected partner, and will depend on factors such as the duration of the action, the partner’s satisfactory prior performance, nature of the project activities, etc. The submission of a quarterly financial report in accordance with UNESCO guidelines will also be required, in addition to the submission of the minutes of project meetings. Mid-term review through remote monitoring or on-site spot check may be required for higher value contracts.

UNESCO shall provide standard templates for the reports mentioned above. Project reporting must be carried out in English, French or Spanish.

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 in invoice format for each instalment of the contract. Save for justified exceptions (e.g. bank account currency in EUR), all instalments shall be paid in US Dollars.

**VII. SUBMISSION OF PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS**

All the information required to prepare your partnership proposal is available on the UN Global Marketplace website (UNGM).

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

1. Application Form (Annex 3) (signature required) ;
2. Budget Proposal Template (Annex 4), including the logo of the candidate partner and the signature of the authorized representative at the bottom (signature and date required);
3. UNESCO Partner Identification Form (Annex 2) (signature and date required);
4. Official Certificate of Legal Status (if the certificate is available in a language other than English and French, the candidate partner must accompany the certificate with a translation);
5. Financial Statements (including the balance sheet, the income and expenses account and relevant annexes) of the last two financial years for which the accounts have been closed, signed and certified by the candidate partner’s own financial authority (comptroller or equivalent) and audited, where applicable, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (signature and date 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 (and not just the project focal point).

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

**Please note that partnership proposals must be submitted in English, French or Spanish.**

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

1. **S.M.A.R.T.** project objectives are:

   **Specific:** Clear, concrete and unambiguous (not open to varying interpretations by different people).

   **Measurable:** Define the desired goals in measurable terms, which allow verification of their achievement. These terms must be either quantified or based on easily identifiable measurements *(e.g. Ensuring the access of at least 20 journalists to rapid, specialized and gender-sensitive legal assistance in X target country).*

   **Achievable:** Set at a level which is ambitious but at the same time realistically attainable.

   **Relevant:** Directly linked to the need/problem identified on the ground and its root causes.

   **Time-bound:** Related to a fixed date or precise time period to allow for the evaluation of their achievement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “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). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In-kind contributions must be quantified. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Whenever lump sums are included, detailed information must be provided in the label with regards to the costs covered by the lump sum (for example, "Launch Event" - Lump Sum - USD 1 000 - Justification: Venue (estimated at $500 based on market price value on the basis of...); refreshments (estimated at $200 for 30 participants based on 3 quotations); facilitator (estimated at $100 on the basis of market price value); transport allowance (estimated at $200 on the basis of current public transport price). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Any possible intermediary banking fees, as well as the implementing partner’s own banking fees associated to the cash transfers from UNESCO to the implementing partner are to be borne by the Partner. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **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 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 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 final approval and signature of the contract. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. All expenditure reports should be certified by an authorized official from the partner organization 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). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)