Call for Project Funding Proposals (PF03-2015)

Pre-submission Workshops (5-7 May 2015)

Questions and Answers

Released: 19 May 2015.

On 30 April 2015, the Secretariat issued its call for proposals for project funding for 2015 (PF03-2015). To explain the call for proposals document and the process it employs in the review of applications received, the Secretariat organized three meetings for interested CSOs, in Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These meetings were organized during the period 5-7 May 2015.

In the course of the said three meetings, CSOs have raised a large number of questions, to which the Secretariat team has responded. Key questions raised and the Secretariat team answers are provided below, in order to make the content of the discussion accessible to interested CSOs who did not have a chance to participate in the said workshops.[1]

Q: Can CSOs that have received Secretariat project funding before apply again?
A: Yes, but proposed projects' implementation starting date, under the current call for project funding proposals, shall be after the end of current projects. Moreover, proposed project completion date, under the current call for project funding proposals shall be at the end of 2016 at the latest.

Q: Can CSOs that have received Secretariat core funding apply for project funding?
A: Secretariat's current core funding recipients are not eligible for project funding under the current call for project funding proposals. However, project funding applicants are encouraged to partner with current Secretariat core funding recipients.

Q: How does the Secretariat define East Jerusalem?
A: Our definition is based on the 'boundaries' of the city as it were governed by Jordan prior to its occupation by Israel in 1967. This includes areas inside and outside of the "Separation Wall"

Q: How many pages shall the proposal document be?
A: Maximum 10 pages without the annexes and the cover page. Font size: 12 (English) and 14 (Arabic).

Q: In the previous project funding application process, all CSOs first submitted concept papers before some applications were shortlisted. Why is the Secretariat not requiring concept papers this time?
A: The Secretariat has simplified the 2015 project funding application form, to save time for both applicant CSOs and for the Secretariat teams reviewing proposals CSOs will submit for Secretariat review.

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[1] Additional questions received in writing following the three workshops have also been included. Questions and answers have been translated into English, and have also been edited for clarity. It is worth noting that these questions and answers are provided for information purposes only, and that the binding governing framework remains as in the Fund Management Manual (revised) and the Call for Proposals documents released on 30 April 2015.

Q: Why is "the unification of the legal and judicial system" only considered a priority for Gaza, not for East Jerusalem or the rest of the West Bank?
A: The unification of the legal and judicial system is an issue also for the entirety of the oPt, but more action is being taken to address this issue in the West Bank than in Gaza. Thus, currently more substantive work on this matter is needed in Gaza than in the West Bank.

Q: My CSO did not attend the meeting where human rights priorities of this project funding cycle were discussed. Will that be a disadvantage?
A: No. The process of determining and identifying priorities lasted between November 2014 and April 2015 and did not rely only on meetings with CSOs or partners only.

The priorities that the Secretariat concluded came from four different kinds of activities: workshops with CSOs, reviewing international and national human rights reports on oPt, focus group meetings with partner and non-partner CSOs, donors and development partners, and reviewing reports and work plans of current Secretariat partners. The Secretariat compared the identified human rights priorities resulting from discussions with CSOs with the human rights priorities identified as a result of the review of human rights reports published by local and international human rights organizations, and partner CSO reports and work plans for 2015, to see if these priorities adequately addressed, and then brought the results of this research effort for discussion with the Secretariat's donors and development partners, including UNDP, OHCHR and Diakonia.

The call is open to all interested CSOs, per the criteria listed in the call for proposals document.

Q: My CSO is planning a project within a human rights field that is not established as a priority for this project funding cycle. Do we still stand a chance to receive funding?
A: The Secretariat will first and foremost follow the human rights priorities that have been identified for this project funding cycle under section (2.2) thematic (and geographic) priorities within the call for proposals. However, the Secretariat may and upon availability of strong and compelling reasons consider funding other innovative projects.

Q: With reference to the non-eligibility for funding CSOs which have previously "attempted to unduly influence the grant application evaluation process", is our CSO on the list of non-eligible CSOs?
A: The Secretariat does not maintain a list of non-eligible CSOs. The Secretariat will examine each application based on the announced criteria, including eligibility and non-eligibility criteria, within the parameters set forth in the Fund Management Manual and the Call for Proposals, and will then submit its recommendations to the Steering Committee for a decision on each.

Q: If a CSO wants to provide detailed information about the roles and responsibilities of its staff, where can this be included?
A: This can be included under section (III) Partnerships of the project funding application form, but CSOs wishing to do so may add an annex to the application form.

Q: Large CSOs generally have better opportunities to write strong proposals than small CSOs. Still, some of the smaller CSOs have more effective field work than large CSOs. Does the Secretariat take such differences into consideration when reviewing the applications?
A: The Secretariat strives to create balance between different criteria when reviewing the applications. For instance, to deal with the differences in the capacity of CSOs related to application development, especially in English, the Secretariat has announced it will accept proposals for this project funding cycle in English or Arabic. Also, the partnership arrangements are highlighted to allow CSOs to address capacity gaps and have a fair opportunity to access the Secretariat's project funding.

Q: If the same CSO has two branches, one in Gaza and one in the West Bank, how does the CSO apply?
A: The CSO shall identify first the human rights priorities it intends to address through its application, and then consider the branch of the CSO which will be responsible for project implementation. Each CSO, regardless of the number of branches of satellite offices it operates, can only submit one application.

Q: If our project involves activities in two (or all) of the three geographical regions (East Jerusalem/rest of the West Bank/Gaza) – in what geographical category will the Secretariat consider the project?
A: CSOs are advised to review carefully human rights priorities identified under section (2.2) thematic (and geographical) priorities of the call for proposals as they design their proposals. The Secretariat will consider the project as targeting the geographical area where the majority of the project activities will take place.

Q: Can we apply for funding for continuation or expansion of an ongoing project?
A: If a CSO wishes to apply to receive project funding to continue or expand an activity it is already implementing, first and foremost the project must be within the human rights priorities identified in section (2.2) of the current call for proposals. CSOs wishing to do so are advised to fill in the project funding application form in its entirety, and to provide justification, detail and motivation, as they would if they were not current project funding recipients. The Secretariat will review and evaluate the proposed project on its own merits.

Q: According to the Call for Proposals, the maximum ceiling amount allocated per project is 100,000 USD. If my CSO applies together with another CSO, can we together be granted 200,000 USD?
A: In principle yes. Two CSOs applying together may be granted up to 200,000 USD, except if your partner CSO is one of the Secretariat core partners or is an ineligible applicant as per the eligibility requirements listed in the call for proposals.. All partnerships need justification and the proposal should clearly demonstrate the role of each partner in all stages of the proposed project, and involve substantial contribution to the implementation of proposed project activities. Each applying CSO has to individually be eligible for and qualified to receive Secretariat project funding (based on the announced criteria). If the role of the partner CSO is not substantial, or is not well justified in the project proposal, partnership is not encouraged.

Q: If two or more CSOs/CBOs establish a partnership and apply, do all partners have to be registered by the Palestinian or Israeli authorities?

A: If a CSO applies together with a CBO, or alternatively with support from an existing core grantee of the Secretariat, only the lead applicant (CSO) needs to be registered. The applying CSO can only request up to 100,000 USD.

If two or more CSOs apply together with the design of the proposed activity clearly showing equal contribution of each CSO (and the CSOs want to hit the 100,000 USD ceiling per each CSO, thus going over the 100,000 USD ceiling for the entire project), all CSOs need to meet the criteria as in the call for proposals document, including: each has to be legally registered by the Palestinian or Israeli authorities, and each has to be active since at least two years, and each has to have human rights elements in its mandate, etc.

Q: Does a partnership have to take place between CSOs/CBOs from the same geographical region (as defined by the Secretariat: East Jerusalem/Rest of the West Bank/Gaza)?
A: No. Partnerships can take place between CSOs/CBOs from all three geographical regions mentioned above. For instance, a CSO from East Jerusalem is allowed to partner with a CSO from Gaza, as the nature of the human rights priorities and proposed interventions merit. Needless to say, all partnerships need justification, the role of each needs clarification and explanation, and it is necessary that the partners complement each other in the design of the proposed project.

Q: In the Call for Proposals, it says that "CSOs applying for project funding are encouraged to include in the design of their proposals the establishment of partnerships with well-established human rights organisations". Will my CSO be disadvantaged if applying alone?
A: According to the evaluation criteria announced by the Secretariat, an application involving a partnership between two or more CSOs/CBOs will earn (up to) five extra credits (out of maximum 100) in the evaluation process. Thus, if a CSO believes they have enough capacity to apply and implement the proposed project alone, and the design of the proposed activity does not indicate/suggest it can benefit from partnerships, the applicant may still score high in the evaluation process.

Q: Is it mandatory to submit a letter of support along with the project proposal?
A: The Secretariat requires documentation to support the commitment of CSOs/CBOs that are involved in the proposed project. Supporting letters from other stakeholders may be requested once the project is approved by the Steering Committee for funding.

Q: In what way can CSOs/CBOs engage with each other?
A: CSOs/CBOs can engage with each other in many different ways. When reviewing an application, the Secretariat will consider the problem that is addressed through the project, how the CSO proposes to deal with the problem, and how the engagement of other CSOs and CBOs contributes in this respect. Proposed partnerships and engagement of CSOs and CBOs need to be motivated, reasonable and productive, and take any of the forms listed in the call for proposals document, and as below:

a. CSOs are especially encouraged to engage CBOs, who are closer to the community and its needs, in both project design and implementation.

b. CSOs are also encouraged to consider partnerships with more established human rights organizations (core grantees) to address applicant CSO institutional capacity gaps.

c. CSOs may also apply for funding of a 'joint' project, where it is clearly demonstrated that there is additional value in combining the efforts of equally strong, capable CSOs. In this case only, CSOs may seek funding at the ceiling of 100,000 USD per CSO involved. The reasoning here being that the CSOs have individually the required legal status, experience, and capacity to carry out a substantial project, up to 100,000 USD ceiling, but the value for the community will be enhanced if two or more CSOs plan and conduct their work together.

Thus, partner CSOs can complement each other, ensure support from more experienced CSOs, or join forces to maximize value and impact.

Q: Will the Secretariat encourage two CSOs to partner together AFTER having received the applications?
A: The Secretariat may encourage, suggest or recommend that CSOs collaborate and partner with other CSOs/CBOs, when approval letters are transmitted.

Q: Can costs for staff be allocated to project activities in the budget?
A: Staffing is sometimes directly connected to project activities especially technical staff and consultants, such as a human rights and/or IHL specialist. In that case, staffing costs may be allocated under project activities.

Q: We would like to buy books and research journals to our organization. Is that an eligible cost?
A: If the books and the journals are to be used for building capacity of staff or otherwise associated with and support project implementation, this is an eligible cost that can be posted under capacity building in the budget.

Q: We would like to buy a laptop for our organization. Is that an eligible cost?
A: If the laptop will be used for project activities, it is an eligible cost.

Q: Sometimes a donor would like to be the sole donor, sometimes a donor only would like to cover a small part of a project. Does the Secretariat have any preferences regarding the level of funding?
A: The Secretariat does not have such a policy. Generally, every proposed project shall be a whole, coherent unit, funded through a single agreement. Though discouraged, due to the heavy workload this imposes on the respective teams of the CSO and Secretariat, both during the design and review phase, as well as during project implementation, CSOs who seek to complement the Secretariat's requested support with additional funding, are advised to detail this in their proposal, and to justify the need for additional resources. CSOs are also required to make sure the design remains within the parameters set forth in the call for proposals and the Fund Management Manual, including in terms of project duration, reporting requirements, and attribution of the proposed project and its activities, outputs, outcomes, and products to the Secretariat's funding. The design of the project and its budget shall be in such a manner which allows for easy and meaningful segregation of the project's elements financed through

other/additional sources. Needless to say a clear plan for the implementation of the project in the event additional funding is not secured shall be provided.

Q: If my organization seeks funding from the Secretariat only for part of a project's total budget, does the column called "total budget" in the budget template refer to the project's total/entire budget or the total budget requested from the Secretariat?
A: The column "total budget" shall be used to provide the total budget requested from the Secretariat. If additional funding is requested from other sources, this needs to be clearly identified (see preceding question and answer). Please use additional column(s) for this purpose, as may be necessary.

Q: If we will begin the project in September and the employees' salaries increase at the beginning of next year according to annual increase or allowances, how can we deal with this?
A: This is normally dealt with according to the CSO's own operations manual, and can be clarified in the budget notes.

Q: If a CSO scores just below the minimum evaluation score of successful applicants, and is thus not selected for funding due to limited resources, will there be a waiting list that the Secretariat will consider if additional funding is received from its donors?
A: The total value of money allocated for this cycle of project funding is approximately USD 1.3 million. If the Secretariat's donor Steering Committee decides on additional funding for this project cycle, BEFORE the final announcement of successful applicants, the list of projects approved may grow. But when the selection of successful applicants is finalized in the Steering Committee, there will be no waiting list(s). Applications are either approved for funding or not.

Q: Can any partner CBO benefit from the activities of the IHL/HR Secretariat capacity development interventions?
A: The Secretariat invites its partner CSOs to capacity development interventions. Partner CSOs can nominate their staff or the staff of CBOs involved in the implementation of their project activities to participate in said interventions.

Q: How does the Secretariat review applications?
A: The Secretariat will review all applications in compliance with the Fund Management Manual and the Call for Proposals. Applications will go through a blind review, and the assessment of each application will be documented. Each applicant CSO will receive an individual letter with the result of the review and its motivation.

Q: Applications must be submitted directly to the Secretariat offices, in either Ramallah/Al-Bireh or Gaza, BOTH in sealed envelopes, AND in electronic format. How do I know that the post will deliver my application (hard copy) to the Secretariat on time?
A: Regular mail is often slow and applications that are delivered to the Secretariat after the application deadline will not be considered. In the past, applicant CSOs/CBOs hired taxis to deliver the hard copy version to the Secretariat on time, and no problems were faced.

Q: How do I communicate with the Secretariat during the current project funding application process?
A: The Secretariat will do its best to answer questions received from applicant CSOs/CBOs regarding the application process. Questions may only be submitted via email: PF03-2015@RIGHTSecretariat.ps, and answers will be provided via email as well. No other means of communication will be used for this matter. Questions received and Secretariat answers may be published via the Secretariat's website, if deemed useful for other interested CSOs.