

Terms of Reference: Evaluation for Gender Sensitive Grant Making

I. Background - About the Organization & Program

Freedom House promotes the spread of freedom and democracy around the world through research, advocacy, and programs that support frontline activists. Since 2007, Freedom House's **Emergency Assistance Program (EAP)** has provided emergency assistance to more than 3,500 human rights defenders (HRDs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and survivors of religious persecution in 110 countries and territories as they come under threat globally. This support is provided across four separate funds that respectively provide support to individual HRDs, to CSOs, to LGBTI+ defenders and CSOs, and to religious freedom activists and survivors of attacks on the basis of belief or lack thereof. These grants respond to threats or attacks in the last six months and cover materials for costs such as related to relocation, medical care, legal assistance, dependent support, or equipment replacement. Freedom House is seeking a consultant to **help EAP understand gendered protection needs, evaluate our current operations**, and ultimately **provide recommendation to inform a gender-sensitive approach** to our grant making across the variety of thematic areas and regional contexts in which we work.

Existing research on the needs and experience of **women human rights defenders (WHRDs)** has centered on qualitative, interview or survey-based analyses of their experiences.¹ This research indicates women human rights defenders (WHRDs)², feminist organizations, and women-led organizations face additional layers of vulnerability and restrictions in the course of conducting their human rights work. These activists are at-risk both for their work on contested issues *and* for their vulnerable identities. In other words, WHRDs are first exposed to the same types of risks that all defenders face as they work to uphold human rights around the world. However, they are also often targeted simply because they are women who are publicly asserting themselves, threatening the "status quo" or ideas of "traditional" or "family" values. Subsequently, WHRDs face gendered threats, stereotypes, harassment, stigmatization, and attacks, including threats or deployment of gender-based violence (GBV) and rape. The origin of these threats is also unique for WHRDs, often originating from their families, communities, or even within their own human rights organizations or the mainstream CSO community.

Notably, the global trends of closing civic space and the criminalization of defenders, democratic retrenchment, and the resurgence of chauvinistic nationalism also worsens the situation of WHRDs. For instance, one study notes that more than 60% of WHRD interviewees indicated that their space as an activist has shrunk in the past years.³ Further, Front Line Defenders reported that 44 women human rights defenders were killed during 2017, up from 40 in 2016 and 30 in 2015.⁴

¹ This includes research conducted by AWID, Urgent Action Fund, JASS, Kvinna till Kvinna, Mama Cash, FRIDA Young Feminist Fund, the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, and many others. Notably, there is a lack of quantitative documentation of violence against WHRDs, however, as data documenting violence against defenders often lacks gender-specific indicators and is not disaggregated by gender (AWID, 2014: 7).

² EAP uses the term "WHRDs" to include human rights activists who are women, as well as other activists (whether male, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex) who also defend the rights of women. ([Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition, 2012: viii](#)).

³ [Kvinna till Kvinna](#), 2018, 6.

⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/11/1026861>

The challenges for WHRDs are also exacerbated by unequal access to justice and financial or technical resources. A study by a subsidiary body of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showed that only 0.5 percent of the aid from member countries for gender equality went directly to women’s civil society organizations in 2014, down from a mere 1.2 percent in 2011.⁵ Women may also face gender discrimination from state protection mechanisms, and WHRDs are less likely to have access to digital or physical security trainings or other opportunities to shore up their ability to prevent and mitigate threats. Despite all this, these studies also indicate that WHRDs are less likely than men to identify as “defenders” and are less likely to perceive themselves as “at-risk” given the normalization of threats and violence in their lives.⁶

II. Need and Objectives

EAP seeks to deepen our understanding of and responsiveness to the specific protection needs of WHRDs, feminist organizations, and women survivors of religious persecution. We are interested in exploring the factors that influence our grant-making to WHRDs, including assessing our own operational processes and identifying larger structural factors (e.g. fewer WHRDs operate in a given region or on a given topic). In addition, we hope to bring gender-sensitivity into the fold of our operations for our existing cases that support WHRDs.

To do so, we seek a consultant to conduct a systematic, formative evaluation of our operations related to emergency assistance grant-making and how gender impacts – or should impact – these processes. This will require drawing upon previous literature and research about the way unequal power dynamics between men and women impacts the experience of WHRDs and women survivors. This should inform an evaluation *of how those dynamics could manifest in any stage of their engagement with us as grant makers*. Any analysis should be inclusive of the types of beneficiaries of all four EAP funds and should consider other relevant vectors of oppression (i.e. religion, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, location, etc.) from an intersectional lens. This could include, but it is not limited to, the following areas:

- **Outreach:** Exploring how our approach to outreach (travel, communications materials, mapping) affects our incoming cases. Assessing how we describe our support to our networks, including how we characterize “human rights work” or “recent threats or attacks”.
- **Referral Partners and Networks:** Examining how our existing referral networks and relationships with peer organizations impact the type and number of cases we support.
- **Types of Assistance:** Evaluating whether our offered types of support are meeting the specific needs of WHRDs, feminist CSOs, and women survivors of religious persecution.
- **Case processing:** Thinking through whether the populations stated above have specific needs during case processing. Examining factors that impact the approval or denial of applications from WHRDs, feminist CSOs, and women survivors of religious persecution.
- **M&E:** Reviewing the information that we currently collect to determine what additional data could help us to better assess our reach and impact going forward.

Findings should inform specific recommendations to enable EAP to adopt a gender-sensitive approach in our grant making. We are open to a variety of structures for this consultancy, including a single consultant, a pair of consultants, or a consulting firm or team.

⁵ [OECD](#), 2016

⁶ [JASS](#), 2017: 8.

III. Methodology

The specific methodology for this consultancy will be developed in an iterative process with Freedom House. However, this process could include:

- Interviews with leading feminist organizations and other emergency funders
- Interviews with generalizable sample size of Freedom House EAP staff to understand case processing, outreach, and other operations
- Possible interviews with beneficiaries
- Review of EAP data
- Review of EAP criteria and policies
- Review of EAP materials (application forms, factsheets, etc.)
- Analysis of current M&E system

IV. Key Deliverables⁷

The specific deliverables for this consultancy will also be developed through an iterative process with Freedom House, but may include:

1. Start-up Meeting in November 2019
2. Inception report with approach and methodology developed by January 2020
3. Initial findings/draft report presented to EAP by March 2020
4. Recommendations and final report by June 2020

V. Candidate Profile

- Robust rights-based, social justice-oriented, and feminist lens; proven commitment to, knowledge of, and ties with the feminist movement
- Ability to facilitate a thoughtful, introspective process
- Experience conducting similar evaluations for other human rights organizations developing specific action steps for integrating a gender sensitive lens to external operations
- Ability to work independently, implement research projects from start to finish, and meet deadlines
- Superior writing skills and a track record of high-quality written reports and oral presentations

VI. How to Apply

Applicants interested in this opportunity should submit a proposal to Colleen Scribner (colleen@freedomhouse.org). Proposals should not exceed 10 pages and should be inclusive of both a budget and a budget justification (not to exceed \$30,000). Any proposal should also be accompanied by a CV (with indication of similar past projects). Applications will be received and reviewed on a rolling basis, but EAP hopes to make a selection in October.

⁷ Please note that dates are subject to change contingent upon timing and results of this solicitation.