

New Covid-19 justice fund targets \$1 million for grassroots groups

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On the heels of Mandela Day, global leaders and civil society groups are proud to launch the [COVID-19 Grassroots Justice Fund](#) to help marginalised and oppressed communities protect their rights during the pandemic and ensure equitable recovery.

Mary Robinson, Chair of The Elders and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said:

“COVID-19 has exacerbated the problems of inequality and injustice and made it harder for grassroots organisations to provide much needed support. The COVID-19 Grassroots Justice Fund is a lifeline to these organisations as they adapt to the challenges created by this unprecedented pandemic, and I am proud that The Elders are supporting it with our partners.”

The Elders, the Legal Empowerment Network, Namati, Justice For All, Pathfinders and the Fund for Global Human Rights have come together as non-funding partners to assemble the COVID-19 Grassroots Justice Fund, which aims to raise US\$1 million to support 100 grassroots justice groups within 12-18 months.

The Legal Empowerment Network will ensure that grantee selection is led by and for grassroots justice leaders. The Fund for Global Human Rights will administer funds, bringing to bear its deep experience channelling resources to grassroots groups around the world. The Pathfinders develop evidence-based strategies for justice for all in a pandemic and will make the case for investing in grassroots justice organisations as part of the pandemic response. The Elders will use their powerful global platform to highlight the vital work of grassroots justice in the pandemic.

Ban Ki-moon, Deputy Chair of The Elders and former UN Secretary-General, said:

“We need to ensure that justice is at the heart of the COVID-19 response and long-term recovery plans. The Elders welcome initiatives such as this COVID-19 Grassroots Justice Fund and the efforts of governments and the private sector to help the 5.1 billion people who lack meaningful access to justice.”

A one-time grant will be provided to qualified grassroots justice defenders and aims to help save lives and address the intertwined health, economic and justice crisis. Applications will initially be limited to groups who have already participated in the Legal Empowerment Network’s COVID-19 Justice Challenge and other COVID-19 activities. An open call will be announced in the future to wider groups, depending on availability of funds.

We are delighted that the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has contributed to the COVID-19 Justice Fund as an anchor donor.

Lee Mikyung, President of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), said:

“When external shocks such as COVID-19 pandemic occur, the crises will have disproportionate impacts on the most vulnerable people and countries in the world. KOICA welcomes this timely launch of the COVID-19 Grassroots Justice Fund to support grassroots justice defenders to adapt to the new circumstance and address the entangled justice, social and health crisis of our time. KOICA believes this fund will build a momentum for us to join in solidarity towards peace and hope for all to ensure that truly no one is left behind.”

Vivek Maru, CEO of Namati, said:

“The pandemic is a justice crisis. We are experiencing a massive increase in threats to basic rights: from prisoners subject to mass infection, to migrant workers at risk of starvation, to accelerate land grabs by opportunistic corporations. Grassroots justice defenders around the world are striving to meet this moment, with little resources and at great risk to themselves. We need to stand with them. Every pandemic response package—governmental or philanthropic—should include an investment in the essential work of grassroots legal empowerment.”

For More Information Contact:

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For more information, read the [Frequently Asked Questions](#)