LIFELINE EMBATTLED CSO ASSISTANCE FUND

Call for Proposals: Countering Abusive Litigation through Effective Responses to SLAPPs in the Global South

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) is pleased to announce a call for proposals to advance effective responses to strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPPs) in the Global South. Grant amounts are not fixed, but successful grant applications may range from $5,000 to $20,000. Proposals selected for support will receive funding through the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund. Applications are due by October 31, 2020.

Background

Strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPs, are private suits filed not to secure relief, but to use the risks and costs of litigation to defuse criticism and opposition and discourage the exercise of fundamental freedoms. SLAPPs are often filed against activists, civil society organizations (CSOs), journalists, and community members by powerful companies and businesspersons in order to prevent citizens from coming together, engaging in protest, and making their voices heard.

SLAPPs have long been prevalent in the Global North, but SLAPPs are also being used to silence activism and undermine civil society in the Global South. In a recent report, Protecting Activists from Abusive Litigation: SLAPPs in the Global South and How to Respond, ICNL reviewed SLAPPs filed in the Global South and anti-SLAPP policy responses implemented in the North and South alike, and offered recommendations on how further anti-SLAPP responses in the Global South could be designed. Our report found that SLAPPs pose a serious threat to the exercise of fundamental freedoms – including freedoms of association and assembly – in the Global South.

ICNL is now inviting proposals from applicants to develop and implement advocacy, monitoring, public awareness, or legal defense strategies aimed at effectively responding to urgent threats posed to civil society by SLAPPs in the Global South.
Project Activities

Activities that may be supported include (but are not limited to):

- Advocating for the advancement of effective policy responses to SLAPPs by relevant ministries, regulatory bodies, legislative bodies, and courts;
- Creating and implementing sustainable methodologies for tracking and reporting SLAPPs filed in a country or regionally;
- Building a coalition of companies and investors that pledge to refrain from SLAPPs and from providing business support to entities that do file SLAPPs;
- Designing and deploying awareness campaigns to increase understanding among the public of the threat posed by SLAPPs and, where appropriate, to increase the reputational consequences of filing SLAPPs; and
- Setting up effective networks of attorneys and legal organizations, including law firms, to provide legal support to those who have been SLAPPed.

This list is merely illustrative, and we strongly encourage applicants with innovative ideas and approaches not described above to apply.

Proposals may focus on responding to the threat of SLAPPs within a single country or across a given region. Proposals may also combine more than of the elements listed above, i.e., advocacy, monitoring, public awareness, and legal defense strategies.

We also encourage applicants, in developing proposals, to consider activities that will convene and give voice to the broad range of activists, civil society organizations, journalists, and community members that are threatened by SLAPPs.

Eligibility Requirements

This call for proposals is open to domestic civil society organizations located in countries currently listed on the DAC List of ODA recipient countries.

How to Apply

Applicants can apply by completing an application for support from the Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund, which may be downloaded as a form or Word document, and submitting it to Lifeline@icnl.org. Please ensure that the subject of your email is “Effective SLAPP Responses: Lifeline Application 2020.”

Applicants should submit their applications no later than October 31, 2020. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.
Application Instructions

Applicants should address all the fields presented in the Lifeline application. In particular, applications should address the following elements:

CIVIC SPACE ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED

- Description of the threat posed to civil society by SLAPPs in the country or region of focus, with reference, as appropriate, to specific SLAPPs filed; and
- Any existing activities undertaken by the applicant or by others in the country or region to respond to the threat posed to civil society by SLAPPs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

- The applicant’s experience and expertise relating to the proposed activities.

INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Detailed description of project activities and how these activities will contribute to the project objectives and anticipated impact;
- Other partners who will contribute to the proposed activities, including activists, civil society organizations, journalists, community members, academic institutions, attorneys, and legal organizations;
- Actors whom the activities are intended to influence, including ministries, regulatory bodies, legislative bodies, courts, companies, and investors;
- Outputs (e.g., meetings, reports, media campaigns, policy proposals); and
- Timeline for completing the proposed activities.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Compliance with eligibility requirements and application instructions;
- Scale of threat posed to civil society by SLAPPs in the country/region of focus;
- Quality of proposal, including that proposed activities are feasible and designed to have an impact on the threat posed to civil society by SLAPPs;
- Diversity of selected proposals with special weight given to geographic/gender diversity and engagement with marginalized/underrepresented groups;
- Proposed budget and apparent value for cost;
- Demonstrated experience and expertise related to proposed activities; and
- Demonstrated capacity to exercise responsible stewardship of received funds.
Terms of Reference

All grant recipients will be required to submit progress reports during the grant period and a final report on activities conducted and project outcomes prior to receiving their final grant disbursements, as well as an impact report following project completion.

Project activities should be no longer than six months in duration.

ABOUT LIFELINE

LIFELINE: THE EMBATTLED CSO ASSISTANCE FUND

The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund provides emergency financial assistance to CSOs under threat or attack and rapid response advocacy and resiliency grants to support CSOs in responding to broader threats against civic space. Lifeline supports a variety of human rights CSOs, including human rights organizations, journalist associations, student groups, labor unions, think tanks, and others.

Lifeline is comprised of a consortium of seven international NGOs, including: Freedom House (lead); CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation; Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA); Front Line Defenders; ICNL; People in Need (PIN); and Swedish International Liberal Centre (SILC).

Lifeline is supported by 19 governments, including: Australia, Benin, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay, as well as the Ford Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation.

ABOUT ICNL

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR NOT-FOR-PROFIT LAW (ICNL)

ICNL works with governments, civil society organizations, and the international community in more than 100 countries to improve the legal environment for civic space around the world. We believe that when people have the space to come together, positive, lasting change can be made. To achieve this vision, individuals must be able to join together, speak out, and take action to make the world a better place. Since 1992, ICNL has worked with our partners at all levels to promote and protect an enabling legal environment for civil society. Our international staff includes experts in all aspects of the laws governing free association, assembly, and expression, spanning from the local to global contexts. We also foster a worldwide network of organizations and individuals with in-depth expertise on a diverse range of issues relevant to civil society. Learn more about our work and browse our research at www.icnl.org.