Summary

Since 2014, The Carter Center has been implementing a project entitled *Advancing Women’s Right of Access to Information* in Liberia with funding from the Irish Aid Civil Society Fund (CSF) and the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia. Building on these efforts, in 2021, the Center expanded its programming to neighboring Sierra Leone under the *Promoting and Protecting Women’s Right of Access to Information in West Africa* project. The Carter Center is currently seeking a project evaluator or evaluation firm, preferably with experience in the West Africa region, to design and conduct a performance evaluation, which includes a final report complete with recommendations. The evaluation should (1) identify whether The Carter Center has met its project objectives and expected results; (2) assess additional unintended benefits, if any; (3) consider lessons learned; and (4) provide recommended next steps for the sustainability of an equitable right to information in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Applicants are encouraged to apply to evaluate the project activities in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, but The Carter Center will accept applications for evaluations of just the Liberia or Sierra Leone programming. The maximum ceiling is $35,000 USD for a combined evaluation of Liberia and Sierra Leone programming, or $25,000 USD for Liberia and $10,000 USD for Sierra Leone if evaluated separately. The total duration of this evaluation is estimated to be no longer than two and a half months, with a first draft due by October 31, 2023, and a final evaluation report due by November 15, 2023.

Background and Context

Recognizing the importance of access to information in Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed the Freedom of Information (FOI) law into effect on September 16, 2010. In advance of the law’s historic passage and with the welcome of civil society and government and support from various donors, The Carter Center was invited by President Sirleaf’s administration to engage key stakeholders in Liberia to help strengthen the draft freedom of information law, raise awareness of its importance, and shepherd through its passage working with the National Assembly to hold public hearings. Following the passage of the FOI Act, the Center’s Rule of Law Program focused efforts on increasing stakeholders’ capacity to implement, enforce, monitor, and use the right, as well as convening the various actors, to work together for its advancement.

In 2014, The Carter Center, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs, and Tourism; the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection; and the Women’s NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), launched a mixed-methods study to determine if women can access information with the same facility (frequency, ease, and rate of success) as men. Findings confirmed our hypothesis that women are largely excluded from exercising their right to
information, with illiteracy, fear, lack of awareness, overwhelming household responsibilities, and immobility identified as the key obstacles. The Center then convened stakeholders to review the findings and develop recommendations to overcome these challenges to women’s access to information, paving the way for the project, Advancing Women’s Right of Access to Information.

In Sierra Leone, the Right to Access Information Act was passed in 2013, which has been lauded as one of the most robust frameworks in the world with important provisions for proactive disclosure and oversight, and enforcement through the establishment of the independent Right of Access to Information Commission (RAIC). However, like Liberia, this right has not reached all citizens equally, with women disproportionately hindered in their ability to access information. To explore the primary barriers facing women in Sierra Leone, the Center organized focus group discussions with 50 women and held meetings with relevant civil society organizations (CSOs), government ministries, UN Women, and Sierra Leone’s Open Government Partnership committee. These meetings identified several key factors (sexual and gender-based violence, illiteracy, the dual burden of household responsibilities and income generation, and patriarchal cultural beliefs) that prevent women from fully exercising their rights, including the right to information.

With support from a 2021 grant provided by Irish Aid (CSF), The Carter Center extended its reach to Sierra Leone to promote women’s right of access to information and has continued this important work to protect the right of access to information in Liberia.

Project Description

Guided by its 2014 study, with support from Irish Aid, The Carter Center launched the project, Advancing Women’s Right of Access to Information in Liberia, in greater Monrovia and Grand Gedeh, Lofa, and Nimba Counties. In December 2020, the Center received additional funding through the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia to expand this work to Bong County, reaching hundreds more women. Moreover, the Embassy-supported project incorporated Monrovia in the Center’s global Inform Women, Transform Lives campaign to increase awareness of women’s right to information and support the Monrovia City Corporation to reach women with information related to various services and engage with CSOs.

Over the years, The Carter Center has worked in collaboration with the Government of Liberia and national and local CSOs to raise awareness of the value of women’s right to information, improve government provision of information to women, and empower women through increased awareness and use of the FOI law. Recognizing the progress that has been made in Liberia, the latest CSF grant, awarded in 2021, aims to further promote and protect women’s access to information in the country and scale these efforts to neighboring Sierra Leone. To achieve these outcomes, the Center works with local partners in Liberia and Sierra Leone to reach the following objectives and outputs:

Liberia

**Objective 1.1 - A more enabling environment for women’s access to information exists**

- *Output 1.1.1* Champions are advocating for women’s access to information
- *Output 1.1.2* Policy and procedure recommendations are adopted
Objective 1.2 - Key local and national government ministries and agencies are effectively providing information to women

- Output 1.2.1 Freedom of Information requests from women responded to timely and appropriately
- Output 1.2.2 Information proactively disclosed to women

Objective 1.3 - Civil society is leading women and access to information programming

- Output 1.3.1 Civil society organizations received organizational capacity building
- Output 1.3.2 Civil society organizations developed and implemented women and access to information projects
- Output 1.3.3 Civil society organizations and youth mentored to implement women and access to information projects

Sierra Leone

Objective 2.1 - A more enabling environment to advance women’s right of access to information is created in Sierra Leone

- Output 2.1.1 Women’s access to information in Sierra Leone study conducted
- Output 2.1.2 Stakeholders developed recommendations for the advancement of women’s access to information

Scope of Work

Programming under the Irish Aid-supported women and access to information project will end in November 2023. Therefore, The Carter Center is seeking an external evaluator or firm (hereafter referred to as “project evaluator”) to design and conduct a performance evaluation of the project. The project evaluator will evaluate all project activities in both Liberia and Sierra Leone (unless specified otherwise in their application) from 2021 through 2023. Additionally, the project evaluator must include an in-depth analysis of project activities in Bong County (2020-2022) as well as the implementation of the Center’s global Inform Women, Transform Lives (IWTL) campaign in Monrovia, Liberia. In doing so, the evaluator will engage the Embassy of Ireland to document their perspective on (1) the effectiveness, efficiency, and results of the work in Bong County and implementation of the IWTL campaign in Monrovia; and (2) the relevance and efficiency of expanding CSF-supported activities into a new geographic area (Bong County).

The evaluation must communicate, when applicable, progress toward achieving project objectives in a measurable way, referencing specific results and activities. The final report will take into consideration the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria as well as the following:

- A comparison of actual accomplishments to the objectives of the federal award established for the period;
  - This should include information relating to financial data and accomplishments to performance goals and objectives.
- The reasons why established goals were not met;
• Underlying factors and local political developments (beyond Carter Center control) that may have affected the achievement of project results, with a particular focus on elections and the COVID-19 pandemic; and
• Additional pertinent information including an analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

The project evaluator will collaborate with The Carter Center in the design and implementation of the evaluation and report production as follows:

• Any substantive changes to the final agreed Terms of Reference (TOR) following the signature of the contract must be agreed upon between The Carter Center and the project evaluator;
• The Carter Center will share with the project evaluator the relevant project and research data and documentation to support the assessment, although it is the project evaluator’s responsibility to identify additional, existing research as part of their desk review;
• The Carter Center will assign a point of contact for management and technical issues; and
• The Carter Center will provide feedback on the first draft of the final report.

Deliverables and Timeline

This will be a deliverables-based contract with a total timeline of approximately two and a half months. Therefore, all prospective project evaluators should submit a proposed timeline for each of the activities outlined below.

1. Desk study and review of all relevant project documentation.
2. Following an inception meeting, submission of inception report including a description of the following
   a. Updated evaluation work plan and timeline;
   b. Updated methodology and data collection tools; and
   c. Proposed Table of Contents/Report Outline.
3. Collection of primary data per agreed upon data collection methodology (please include suggested methodology in your proposal document). The Carter Center staff can facilitate connecting the evaluator to or bringing together the relevant participants as necessary.
4. Virtual debrief meeting with Carter Center staff in Monrovia and Atlanta to present broad findings.
5. Submission of the first draft of the final report in English for review and feedback by Carter Center staff. *The Carter Center reserves five (5) business days to provide comments.* The draft should include at least the following sections at a minimum:
   a. Executive summary of key findings and recommendations
   b. Table of contents
   c. Methodology
   d. Research findings
   e. Analysis
   f. Conclusions
   g. Lessons learned/recommendations
h. Appendices, including terms of reference, list of interviewees, evaluation itinerary, research tools, evaluator’s biography, and other annexes (including pictures and accompanying informed consent forms, if taken).

6. Submission of the final version of the report of publishable quality within 5 business days following the deadline for receipt of comments, on *November 15, 2023, at the latest.*

**Evaluation Management**

The evaluation will be managed by the Associate Director in Atlanta and the Program Lead and Senior Program Officer in Monrovia.

The project evaluator will adhere to the American Evaluators Association guiding principles and observe the highest standard of ethics and gender sensitivity, using their best efforts to protect The Carter Center against fraud, in the performance of the contract. In particular, the project evaluator will not engage in any corrupt, fraudulent, coercive, collusive, or obstructive conduct. The evaluator will agree to abide by The Carter Center code of conduct during the length of the consultancy (to be provided prior to deployment along with the contract).

The Carter Center shall have legal title to any research, statistical, and other data and documentation created by the evaluator, and Irish Aid will have unlimited access to such material.

**Qualifications**

The successful applicant will demonstrate a strong familiarity with evaluating programs, an understanding of Sierra Leonean and Liberian culture and gender sensitization, and a proven record of quality implementation. Specifically, if the successful applicant is an individual, the preferred candidate will have a J.D., Ph.D., or master's degree in monitoring and evaluation, statistics, public administration or policy, international development or development studies, sociology, or a similar field. Additionally, the successful applicant will demonstrate previous experience leading and/or independently conducting an evaluation. If the successful candidate is a firm, the evaluation leader should demonstrate these preferred qualifications. Individuals are required to provide resumes/CVs whereas evaluation firms should submit detailed biographies for each member of their team. The Carter Center will provide ongoing input to the process based on its own experience and understanding of the issues being addressed.

**Application Instructions and Required Proposal Documents**

Interested applicants are to submit their applications to ruleoflawliberia@cartercenter.org with the email subject line titled “WATI Final Project Evaluation Proposal” by the close of business (5 pm EST) on August 23, 2023. Submission should include the following:

1. Indication of whether the applicant is applying to evaluate the entire project (Liberia and Sierra Leone) or one of the individual countries (Liberia or Sierra Leone)
2. A cover letter outlining the individual/organization's interest in the position and a short summary of their application.
3. A short technical proposal (max 5 pages), including a proposed budget and timeline for conducting the evaluation, with a clear description of the methodology.
4. Updated curriculum vitae clearly spelling out qualifications and experiences. If the applicant is a firm, this is required of the three (3) primary leads that will undertake the work.
5. A commitment that the service provider or firm will be entirely engaged if consultancy is awarded.
6. Gender-sensitive professional certifications are not required, though highly appreciated.

Proposal Scoring

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<th>Evaluation Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Required Documentation</strong></td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>All required documentation is included</td>
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<td><strong>Workplan and Technical Proposal</strong></td>
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<td>Key personnel have a depth of experience and expertise</td>
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<td>Gender and Inclusion*</td>
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<td>evaluation, knowledge of the space, expected risks/</td>
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<td>Interview shows a clear understanding of how to conduct</td>
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<td>a large-scale, program-wide, final evaluation and</td>
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<td>makes known the skills/abilities relevant to carrying</td>
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*Bidders shall demonstrate their commitment to supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment through their operations (current or future plans/activities regarding gender diversity in the recruitment process, and/or ensuring equal pay between men and women, and/or opportunities for women to be empowered and promoted internally, and/or prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse or any form of discrimination at work, and/or paid parental leave policies for men and women, and/or provide professional safety training and access to equal protection facilities for all staff without discrimination, etc.*