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The World Justice Project

Twelve Organizations Win Seed-Grants from World Justice Project Competition to Strengthen the Rule of Law

Winners in 11 countries will receive support to incubate solutions that advance the rule of law

WASHINGTON, DC—The World Justice Project (WJP), an independent, global organization working to advance the rule of law, announced today the twelve winners of its Roderick B. Mathews Opportunity Fund[®] competition – a group that represents some of the most innovative social justice efforts underway on the ground in communities around the world.

Named in honor of former board member Roderick B. Mathews, the Opportunity Fund is an initiative designed to incubate practical programs that strengthen the rule of law. Seed-grants ranging from US\$10,000-\$30,000 are given to individuals, organizations, or networks with the best actionable ideas.

Applicants from 67 countries proposed solutions to address critical issues ranging from protecting the rights of migrant workers to combatting corruption in areas where it is most prevalent. Each applicant used data from the [WJP's Rule of Law Index[®]](#) – an impartial tool that offers a comprehensive picture of the extent to which countries adhere to the rule of law in practice – to identify areas where the rule of law was weak and could be improved. Winners were selected for their innovative approach, as well as the potential reach and impact of their proposals.

The winning projects are:

- **Cameroon Healthcare Access Programme**, The Global Citizen's Initiative (Cameroon)

Millions of adults and children in Cameroon are denied access to basic health services, including prenatal care, treatment for malaria, and treatment for HIV/AIDS because of government corruption. The Cameroon Healthcare Access Programme will tackle corruption by educating Cameroon's healthcare professionals and forming a national healthcare access coalition composed of representatives from government, the health sector, and women's groups.

- **China Migrant Justice Project**, Justice Ventures International (China)

Many migrant workers residing in China's urban cities are susceptible to exploitation by employers and subject to harsh, unsafe, and illegal working conditions. Many are not paid for their work, nor are they aware of their rights. The China Migrant Justice Project will build a network of legal services and will strengthen the capacity of local NGOs in Beijing to help migrant workers. The program will expand legal awareness among migrant workers and connect them with legal aid counseling for issues such as occupational safety, access to healthcare, and access to safe and affordable housing.

- **Keep Calm and Hack Bribes**, Bribe-Hackers (India)

In India, over half the population has reported paying a bribe, despite India's anti-corruption law. Bribe-Hackers is a platform designed to create a bridge between victims of bribery and law enforcement agencies

(such as traffic police, public utility services, etc.) by creating a hotline and undertaking inquiries into each bribery report. The program is targeted towards India's youth.

- **Construction of Society through Hip Hop, Young in Prison (Colombia)**

In Bogotá, Colombia, many children grow up in marginalized communities where weapons and drugs rule the streets, and poverty and lack of opportunities lead youth into correctional institutions. Unfortunately, many of these same problems exist in the correctional institutions. Through art forms like rap, breakdance, and graffiti, youth can explore topics of relevance to them. The objective is to provide a positive outlet for expression and learning, and to help break the social isolation that many former incarcerated youth face when coming out of prison.

- **Bringing Community Lawyering Resources to NGOs and Pollution Victims, Pacific Environment (China)**

China's rapid development has led to high levels of pollution. Wealthier segments of society are able to move away from polluted areas, but poorer citizens lack the resources to move, seek compensation if their land is polluted, or pay for healthcare to mitigate the impact of pollution. Pacific Environment's program will place lawyers-in-training at local environmental NGOs to strengthen their capacity to hold governments and corporations accountable for their environmental and public health impacts. The program will build long-term mentoring relationships with University School of Law in Qingdao.

- **Establishing an Effective Detention Monitoring Structure in the Deep South of Thailand, Cross Cultural Foundation (Thailand)**

Inhumane conditions in detention centers and prisons in southern Thailand have worsened with the imposition of special security laws. These laws allow law enforcement and the military to torture prisoners with impunity. In order to protect victims of torture and prevent any future ill treatment in detention facilities, the Cross-Cultural Foundation (CCF) will help train and support local NGOs to become effective watchdogs. The CCF will provide training for paralegals in human rights abuse detection and forensic knowledge, and effective monitoring of conditions in detention centers.

- **Housing Rights of the Urban Poor in Fortaleza, Urucum (Brazil)**

In Fortaleza, the capital city of Ceará, thousands of poor families are being threatened with eviction in order to prepare the city for events that will take place in the coming years—including the 2016 Olympic Games. Many families and communities have already had their homes expropriated without adequate compensation. Urucum will help communities defend their rights to adequate housing through a combination of art and legal education. Urucum will lead workshops on the use of silk screen, theater, photography, and video to allow communities to show themselves from their own perspective and create more visibility for housing rights.

- **Invisible Unfairness: Justice Administration for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties, Special Attention Project (Ghana)**

Children with learning difficulties in Ghana's public schools do not receive adequate support and are at high risk of dropping out of school and offending the law. The justice system does not typically consider the role that learning difficulties play in committing the offense, which can lead to unfair judgment for juvenile offenders. The Special Attention Project will train juvenile justice professionals to meet the needs of juvenile offenders with learning difficulties, compile detailed data about children with learning difficulties that are in conflict with the law, and use this data to recommend reforms.

- **Yangon Trial Monitoring Project**, Justice Base (Myanmar)

Decades of military rule have severely damaged the institutions that are vital to ensuring protection of the rule of law in Myanmar. The justice system is widely considered to be corrupt, expensive, and ineffective. For example, despite a constitutional mandate that trials be held in public, virtually all trials are held in secret. Justice Base will implement a trial monitoring pilot project in Yangon, working closely with local legal professionals. Justice Base will use the findings of its courtroom observation to provide recommendations to the Myanmar government and judiciary for reforms.

- **Project Model Kivalina**, The Centre of the Earth (United States)

Kivalina, an indigenous whaling community situated off the northwestern coast of Alaska, is under threat from rising sea levels. The U.S. government has ordered the village to relocate to higher ground within ten years, leaving the community to cover the majority of the costs. The Kivalina project aims to create a physical model of the contested territory as an educational tool to create more informed dialogue between the community, the state of Alaska, federal governmental agencies, and others as to how climate change and environmental issues pose a threat to cultural preservation. The project will model what a sustainable environment for the indigenous peoples of the Arctic might look like.

- **Street Law Zambia Legal Education Program**, Street Law Zambia (Zambia)

Street Law Zambia (SLZ), a newly-founded organization associated with Street Law, Inc., creates programs to teach youth about law, democracy, and human rights. SLZ's program is adapted to address issues specific to Zambia, including police brutality, police accountability, corruption, gender based violence, and legal education deficiency. SLZ will create and implement Zambia's first complete legal education textbook and curriculum for youth to be piloted in Zambian schools. The curriculum will focus on gender based violence, police brutality, and responsibility.

- **The First 48 Hours: Evaluating Early Decisions in Criminal Cases in Mexico**, Lawyers with Cameras (Mexico)

While television and films have taught us to expect law enforcement to process crime scenes with the utmost care, what few of us know is that the memory of eyewitnesses and suspects is just as fragile as the physical evidence in the crime scene. Furthermore, tampering with it leaves few noticeable traces. Therefore, eyewitness identifications and confessions should be elicited carefully, in order to avoid misidentifications and wrongful imprisonment. Lawyers with Cameras will survey prisoners and actors in the justice system to find out what safeguards are put in place during interrogations of defendants and eyewitness identification procedures. The data gathered will inform recommendations to reduce the risk of misidentification.

Over the coming year, the WJP will support these twelve programs by raising the visibility of their efforts, and fostering connections through its global network including government, civil society, academic, and business leaders. To learn more, visit <http://worldjusticeproject.org/opportunity-fund-competition>.

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About The World Justice Project

The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, global organization working to advance the rule of law for the development of communities of opportunity and equity worldwide. The WJP believes that everyone is a stakeholder in the rule of law, and that a multidisciplinary approach is essential to creating systemic, long-lasting change. When laws are fair, universally implemented, and respected by all, they can help unlock the true social, political, and economic potential of entire societies. For more information, visit www.worldjusticeproject.org.