1. Background

Human rights defenders around the world are facing criminal prosecutions, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and convictions, physical and online harassment, torture, beatings, and other forms of intimidation. In some cases, human rights defenders have been disappeared or murdered with impunity.

The American Bar Association Center for Human Rights (the Center) through its Justice Defenders Program (the Program) mobilizes the global legal community to provide pro bono legal assistance to and monitors trials of human rights defenders at risk. By monitoring civil and criminal proceedings against defenders, the Program promotes respect for due process rights; raises awareness of threats to defenders; and documents systematic abuses of the judicial system to inform advocacy for judicial and legislative reforms. As a result, human rights defenders are able to continue working to hold their governments accountable, defeat efforts to isolate and stigmatize them for their work, and generate the public pressure needed to secure sustainable reforms.

2. Proposed Project

The Center is seeking a partner organization operating in Togo, Cameroon and/or Equatorial Guinea to train local lawyers in trial monitoring based on recognized regional and international fair trial standards. Thereafter the partner organization will identify potential cases of human rights defenders (defined as anyone who, individually or with others, promotes or protects human rights. This may include journalists, lawyers, community leaders and any other actor facing retaliatory legal proceedings for their legitimate work) and deploy the trained lawyers to observe the trials, document proceedings and produce trial monitoring reports. The partner organization in conjunction with the Center’s Justice Defenders Program, will strategize and provide pro bono technical legal assistance and advocacy support in relation to the identified cases. In addition to individual reports, the partner organization will be expected to document any systematic due process challenges in any one of the listed countries, in order to recommend and advocate for substantive reform of the judicial process.

The maximum amount that will be awarded is USD 30,000.00. All deliverables must be completed by December 30, 2020.

Expected outputs

i. A two-day trial observation training for lawyers based on regional and international fair trial standards. The training must be tailored to the designated partner’s country of choice’s national laws and criminal justice system.

ii. During the duration of the project, at least 30 completed cases of assistance provided to human rights defenders. Assistance will include trial observations, technical support such as submissions to regional and international human rights bodies and advocacy support such as public or private engagements with government and non-government actors.
iii. A comprehensive report of the systematic fair trial violations documented over a 6-month period.
iv. Development of an advocacy strategy to advance respect for fair trial rights in the respective country. The proposed strategy must include engagement at the national, regional and international level.

3. Eligible Applicants

i. The ideal contractor will have significant ties to at least one of the key countries (Togo, Cameroon, or Equatorial Guinea), knowledge of current trends in restrictions on human rights defenders in the country, and access to national network of lawyers willing and able to take on pro bono legal work and trial monitoring.

ii. The organization must demonstrate the capacity and technical expertise to (a) conduct the proposed training and (b) coordinate and supervise trial observations.

iii. Knowledge of physical and digital security protocols in the field of human rights work.

iv. Must be a non-profit, non-governmental organization registered to work in any of the three (3) listed countries, namely; Togo, Cameroon or Equatorial Guinea.

4. Submissions

Qualifying organizations must submit a two to three paged project proposal. The proposal must provide the following information:
- Name and contact (telephone, email and physical address of the organization);
- The aims and objectives of the project tailored to the target country of intended operation.
- An indicative budget;
- A brief history and description of the organization; including governance/management structure;
- Information/documentation on past experience/activities relevant to this call for proposals and how this work aligns with the work of the Center.

For any questions related to the proposal, partners are encouraged to contact the Center on the email address below. Questions will be accepted and responded to up to March 15, 2020.

Proposals must be submitted to mooya.nyaundi@americanbar.org no later than March 31, 2020, at 12.00 noon [Eastern Time].

The American Bar Association is one of the largest voluntary professional associations in the world, with approximately 400,000 members and over 3,500 entities. It is an independent organization that is committed to advancing human rights and a just rule of law in the United States and abroad.