Terms of Reference

Consultancy- Democratizing Global Governance and Multilateralism

(Please read submission instructions carefully)

Background

The COVID pandemic is likely to worsen an already grim trajectory of climate change, poverty, racial injustice, humanitarian crisis, gender injustice, conflict, a crisis of democracy, economic crisis, and militarism. It has a profound effect on multilateral spaces which are already under attack, with the move to virtual meetings diminishing the opportunities for critical challenge and collective mobilization.

Multilateralism – where one state has one vote, where international human rights agreements are enshrined and systems to monitor and hold governments accountable for their obligations, where institutions are mandated to advance human rights and international solidarity, where citizens and their representative civil society organizations can make claims – is under attack. The attack is multifold whether through funding cuts, withdrawal from agencies, global agreements, or worse weakening human rights instruments. This has been attributed to the rise of unilateralism, nationalism, isolationism, authoritarianism, populism, and protectionism- ideologies that seek to suppress the principles upon which the United Nations was founded.

Activism in multilateral spaces is key to activism in countries – they can reinforce one another or undermine one another. A loss of democracy or accountability in one can be used explicitly or implicitly to justify suppressing democracy in the other. Some of the necessary short-term changes (nationally and internationally) to respond to COVID (such a moving to virtual meetings) risk being abused to limit accountability, democracy and dialogue in the longer term (with bad practices and examples cross-infecting from international to national level).

Given the trends observed regarding civil society participation in international spaces over the past decade or more, the COVID-19 catastrophe is likely to provide cover for further closing of civic space at multilateral level. The agenda to undermine civil society has included limiting the space for activists, organizations and movements including women’s rights, environmental and land rights activists from engaging both nationally and at multilateral levels – linking the local to the global. Governments (in the North and the South) suppress dissenting voices by enacting a range of restrictions on the freedom of assembly, expression, and association, harassing, and demonizing human rights defenders and criminalizing dissent through expansive anti-terrorism laws.

Since the start of the millennium, young people have been breathing new life into social justice activism, creating major upheavals in political systems, ecological awareness, gender equality, anti-privatization, anti-austerity, and pro-democracy struggles. Much of this activism has been local and parallel to more established civil society movements. Multilateral spaces have been an opportunity for these youth movements to meet, organize, strategize, and influence global agendas. By their very nature, multilateral spaces are helping to shape next generations of leadership. Closing these doors is yet another means of excluding youth from key decision making, while also promoting the perception that global forums are simply talking shops that are of no use.
This undermines young people, youth movements, and citizens’ capacity to engage politically, demand accountability from government, corporations, other non-state actors and to play a substantial role in shaping economic, political and social policies and outcomes that can drive protection of human rights, gender equality, redistributive development and progressive transformation. This is to the detriment of people living in poverty and exclusion including: women, young people, persons with disabilities; LGBTIQ people; members of minority groups; indigenous peoples; internally displaced persons; and non-nationals, including refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers and children.

**Intervention and objectives**

ActionAid seeks to publish a report mapping and documenting trends/case studies highlighting how states, fundamentalist groups and transnational corporate interests have sought to capture and undermine multilateralism by hampering democratic participation, transparent rule making and accountability, particularly by impeding the right of human rights defenders and civil society to participate in these instances, in particular the UN and IFIs.

- To demonstrate the links between neoliberal policies, fundamentalism, and political and economic elites’/right wing capture/undermining of open, democratic multilateral spaces.

- To highlight how the violation of rights to civic participation at multilateral level undermine the realization of the mandate of multilateral institutions and shrinks space for civil society and governments especially from the global south.

- To come up with policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas on how multilateralism could expand space for engagement of civil society/young people and be more fit for purpose in a post-COVID world to inform advocacy around key international targets: 75th Anniversary of the UN (UNGA 2020), 25 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Reform, Financing of the UN and Reform of IFIs.

**Scope**

The report will develop its finding along three axes:

1. **major trends, actors, issues, and debates on the future of multilateralism, global governance and international legal/human rights frameworks:**
   a. hostility to the advancement of human rights related to gender, sexuality, and reproduction.
   b. resistance to transparent democratic negotiating processes.
   c. watering down major human rights conventions and international law.
   d. creation of parallel selective and unrepresentative multilateral processes.
   e. increasing influence and involvement of the private sector and multi-stakeholder initiatives (corporate executives, leaders of civil society organizations, officials from governments and the secretariats of UN agencies, academics etc.) in solving transnational issues at multilateral level, their risks in terms of democracy, human rights and accountability particularly impact on civil society and governments in the Global South.
   f. the real or potential corporate hijacking of multilateral institutions e.g. UN-WEF MoU etc.
   g. attempts to reshape progressive and democratic architecture of global governance.

2. **hostility towards civil society and human rights defenders e.g. sexism, misogyny, and racism.**
   Targeting 3 or 4 key processes and mechanisms:- women’s rights (UN CSW, UN HRC-Binding Treaty, IFIs) and young people’s rights (COP-UNFCC, UN HRC), gender responsive public services-GRPS (UN CSW, IFIs) women-led humanitarian response (World Humanitarian
Summit/Sendai Principles), food sovereignty-UN FAO, Committee on World Food Security (CFS), natural resource rights (UNEP, climate justice (COP-UNFCC).

a. hostility to the advancement of human rights related to gender, sexuality, and reproduction.
b. reprisals, violence and harassment of human rights defenders and other civil society actors before, during or after participation in multilateral spaces.
c. micro-acts that frustrate civil society actors’ ability to participate effectively in proceedings.
d. impact of conservative actors in the international arena - introducing regressive language in international human rights documents.
e. denied visas despite official UN invitations.
f. travel restrictions/bans against women’s rights activists and human rights defenders including bans on visas from certain countries.
g. unjustified access restrictions on ECOSOC accredited CSOs.

3. **come up with bold policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas** reimagining multilateralism and the role that non-state actors including young people and women could play in enabling more effective multilateral responses to transnational challenges in a post-COVID world to inform advocacy around key international targets: 75th Anniversary of the UN (UNGA 2020), 25 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Reform, Financing of the UN, Reform of IFIs and regional intergovernmental bodies etc.

**ActionAid seeks expressions of interest from experienced consultants.**

**The Consultant’s task is to:**

Develop a clear and concise "ideas report" with bold policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas reimagining multilateralism and the role that non-state actors including young people and women could play in enabling more effective multilateral responses to transnational challenges in a post-COVID world, including to:

- conduct desk review on the elite/right wing capture of the multilateral spaces, private sector and multi-stakeholder initiatives and impact on civil society and governments in the Global South.
- Conduct a desk review of the proposals already tabled by various groups for reforming or reinventing global governance (UN and IFIs) and the role of citizens/civil society within that.
- conduct interviews with leading academics, activists/movements and Global South and North diplomats to elicit their ideas for change (including the Swedish government, co-lead on the UN@75 political declaration) and assess which proposals are gaining traction.
- conduct interviews and document the case studies or compile information where case studies do not exist- identify and design, in collaboration with ActionAid Policy Advisors, organizations/individuals/coalitions to interview on their experiences in engaging in decision-making processes at multilateral level-UN and IFIs. Based on 3 or 4 of these- women’s rights (UN CSW, UN HRC-Binding Treaty, IFIs) and young people’s rights (COP-UNFCC, UN HRC), gender responsive public services-GRPS (UN CSW, IFIs) women-led humanitarian response (World Humanitarian Summit/Sendai Principles), food sovereignty-UN FAO, Committee on World Food Security (CFS), natural resource rights (UNEP, climate justice (COP-UNFCC).
- compile the case studies in one report and share with partners, individuals featured, ActionAid countries to review and validate.
To come up with bold policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas reimagining multilateralism and the role that non-state actors including young people and women could play in enabling more effective multilateral responses to transnational challenges in a post-COVID world, based on the case studies, in a clear and concise manner to inform advocacy including around: financing of the UN, UN Reform, Reform of the IFIs.

**Report outline**
A report with bold policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas reimagining multilateralism and the role that non-state actors including young people and women could play in enabling more effective multilateral responses to transnational challenges in a post-COVID world. With clear reflections on the implications of COVID-19 concerning how this might impact negatively or be used positively as a turning point.

- Working Title: **Democratizing Global Governance and the future of Multilateralism: Perspectives from Civil Society.**
- Foreword- Purpose of report and methodology (with acknowledgements).
- Executive Summary- Bring in the big picture (based on case studies and interviews covered) and bold ideas/proposals/alternatives.
- Section One: Background: major trends, actors and debates in decision making in multilateral spaces.
- Section Two: Case studies – selected case studies UN and IFIs – civic participation regarding based on 3 or 4 of the following areas TBC -women’s rights (UN CSW, UN HRC-Binding Treaty, IFIs) and young people’s rights (COP-UNFCC, UN HRC), gender responsive public services-GRPS (UN CSW, IFIs) women-led humanitarian response (World Humanitarian Summit/Sendai Principles), food sovereignty-UN FAO, Committee on World Food Security (CFS), natural resource rights (UNEP, climate justice (COP-UNFCC).
- Section Three: Bold policy recommendations/alternatives/ideas reimagining multilateralism and the role that non-state actors including young people and women could play in enabling more effective multilateral responses to transnational challenges in a post-COVID world, based on the case studies.
- Conclusion.

**Consultant Competencies and Skills:**

ActionAid will select a consultant who meets the following criteria:

1. A post graduate degree in International Studies/Relations, Development Studies, International Law or Policy, and others as may be relevant.
2. Demonstrable experience in working with or engaging multilateral organizations – UN, IFIs.
3. At least 10 years’ experience in engaging with or tracking multilateral organizations or civil participation in multilateral spaces including debates around reform of the UN and IFIs.
4. Experience in drafting case studies, in a clear and concise manner to inform advocacy.
5. Familiarity with design of materials for policy campaigning, media and, advocacy for social justice.
6. Good knowledge of civil society groups and coalitions campaigning and advocacy for social justice targeting multilateral organizations.
7. Knowledge of young people’s and women’s rights.
8. Previous successful involvement with, and good knowledge of I/NGOs and civil society is desired.
9. Good interviewing, analytical, presentation, coordination, and organizational skills.
10. Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.
11. Close attention to detail in all tasks and integrity and professional discretion.

**Time Frame**
The assignment is expected to be completed by August 15, 2020.

**Submission of Proposals**

Potential candidates are requested to submit technical and financial proposals to undertake this consultancy. Submit a proposal not exceeding 4 pages, excluding a CV and budget. The proposal should include the following:

1. A write up outlining a clear understanding of and methodology to be used in undertaking the assignment.
2. Detailed timeline for the assignment.
3. A detailed financial offer including time estimates for each task and consultant’s daily rate.
4. A letter of application (including desired remuneration) demonstrating suitability for the role; this should clearly state how the consultant’s knowledge, skills and recent experiences fulfil the required competencies; similar assignments conducted and current CV with two references.

The proposal in, electronic format, must be received at ActionAid offices by 28 June 2020 by 20:00 hrs. GMT. The proposal should be e-mailed to:

**Ruth Obwaya**
Ruth.Obwaya@actionaid.org

ActionAid will unfortunately only be able to respond to short-listed candidates.