



## REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA-JAG-2020-007)

### Support to Investigative Journalism

#### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

USAID Justice for All Project (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Project’) is a five-year (2016-2021) project designed to improve court performance through the implementation of comprehensive judicial performance standards in efficiency, transparency, accessibility and accountability. The Project also provides assistance to investigative journalism and media outlets- as part of activities implemented under component 3- to strengthen their roles as important actors in the justice reform process and as watchdogs for implementation of reforms. The ultimate goal of the Project is to increase public confidence in Albania’s judicial system.

#### II. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Domestic Violence remains a major challenge to Albania’s social development. A National Population survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania, in 2018, revealed that 1 in 2 women, or 52.9 % of women from a total of 3443 participants in the survey, had experienced at least one form of violence during their lifetime, while 47 % of women who were married or living with a partner, declared to have been abused by their partner. Additionally, 17 women have been reported in media, in the last two years, as being killed by their husbands or ex-husbands.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the lockdown measures that Albania is applying, since March 10th, potential victims of Domestic Violence (DV) are being forced to live in the same environment with their abusers. Additionally, given the restrictive measures, victims of DV are prevented from referring such cases to the authorities, in person. Referring such cases through helplines, is the only opportunity that is left. Still, this can be an added risk to these victims if they are caught or heard by their abusers while reporting on their cases.

International media has already reported on an increase in cases of DV, due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures<sup>1</sup>. In Albania, human rights activists have also asked for an increased focus on victims of DV during this crisis<sup>2</sup>. Currently, there is no research or reporting in Albania media on cases of DV, or measures that have been taken by social care institutions, to protect victims of DV and ensure that their cases are reported, addressed, and followed up.

The media plays a major role in exposing cases of abuse and domestic violence and addressing the need for an increased attention to such issues by state institutions and non-governmental actors, working in this field. Reporting on such issue, could help potential

<sup>1</sup> See article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domestic-violence.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reporter.al/karantinimi-rreziku-i-shtuar-per-viktimat-e-dhunes-ne-familje/>

victims of DV to feel that they are not left alone, and discourage DV occurrences by enforcing legal measures for abusers.

The Project seeks to award grants to support investigative journalism reporting on the impact of COVID-19, on DV in Albania, in areas that include, but are not limited to: (i) impact of COVID-19 crisis and lockdown measures on DV cases; (ii) effectiveness of social care institutions and national helplines/support for DV victims, during and after the pandemic; (iii) handling of DV cases by the justice system during and after the pandemic (iv) reporting on how victims of DV have been experiencing lockdown measures and support they have been receiving/lacking during such period. These grants will be available to individual journalists or teams of journalists.

The stories (text and audiovisual) that will be supported by the Project through this RFA will be published on the web site of Faktoje.al. Secondary publication on other media is optional.

The Project seeks creative, innovative applications in support of activities that will contribute to achieve the following objectives:

- Expose gaps in the DV referral mechanisms through in-depth, fact-based, high quality reporting on DV, especially in case of emergencies, such as a pandemic;
- Expose limitations of social institutions' response to addressing cases of DV and dealing with victims and abusers, especially in case of emergencies, such as a pandemic;
- Expose limitations in addressing cases of DV to courts and court efficiency in treating such cases;
- Expose struggles and challenges that DV victims have to undergo in order to address their cases and be provided with safety and security, especially in case of emergencies, such as a pandemic;

Applications must specifically address one or more of the above objectives. In addition, in order to be considered, all applications must include the required elements on Annex A: *Grant Application Form* and must propose strategies for the successful implementation of the required grant activities.

Award criteria will include, among others: (i) the relevance of the proposed subject matter of the investigation; (ii) past performance of the submitter; (iii) the efficiency of the proposed investigative project; (iv) likelihood of completion of the investigation; and (v) the likelihood of the proposed story being published and broadly disseminated.

The Project will not review applications that include the following activities:

1. Support for or lobbying on behalf of a particular political party;
2. Religious activities.
3. Humanitarian activities;
4. Theoretical research;
5. Any construction activities.

### III. GRANT AWARDS

The Project plans to award a maximum of 2 (two) grants for projects spanning 2 (two) to 4 (four) months. Grant funds may be used only for activities directly related to the implementation of the project. Awards will be made in the following categories:

**Small grants for investigations and story production pieces:** Up to \$1,500.00

Awards can be made to individual journalists or a team of journalists.

The Project reserves the right to make multiple awards or no awards in response to the applications received. Applicants must bear all the costs and risks related to the preparation of any proposals submitted in response to this RFA. Further, the Project reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received and reserves the right to ask further clarifications from the applicants.

### IV. TIMELINE

All proposals should include a timeline of activities guided by the following deadlines:

<b>Request for applications issued:</b>	June 30, 2020
<b>Deadline for submitting questions:</b>	Ongoing – all answers will be published at <a href="http://www.ewmi.org/JFA">http://www.ewmi.org/JFA</a>
<b>Responses to be provided by</b>	Ongoing – Questions will be answered and responses posted within 3 business days of receipt
<b>Submission deadline</b>	Last date for submission in this round is July 30, 2020.
<b>Proposal review:</b>	Ongoing – All Proposals will be reviewed by the designated Grants Review Committee within 10 business days of receipt.
<b>Final award decision announced:</b>	Ongoing – applicants will be notified of a final decision regarding their application within 20 business days of receipt.

Applications will be accepted until July 30, 2020 and awards for this round may be made until August 20, 2020 or until such time as all funding has been awarded.

**Please note that evaluation and award dates are subject to change.**

### V. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The Project seeks applications from journalists or teams of journalists working in print, broadcast, online media, and freelance journalists in Albania. Applications may be submitted by individual journalists or a team of journalists. Teams shall name one of its member as the primary person responsible in relation to the Project.

The applications should also meet the following criteria:

- The investigation should uncover new and important information of obvious public interest;
- The journalist(s) already has key information (relevant sources, specific cases, documents and data) related to the proposed subject of investigation and access to additional information is realistic;
- The investigation must not present an unreasonable risk to the participating journalists;
- A realistic timeline for carrying out the proposed investigative reporting must be provided
- The journalist is expected to attend an Initial Orientation meeting with the Project’s technical staff and be responsive to requests by Project staff, during investigative work.
- The journalist(s) must not be, suspended, excluded or otherwise ineligible to receive US Federal funding;

Applicants selected for awards will be subject to an Eligibility Checklist assessment conducted by the Project.

## VI. EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

The selection process will be administered by a Grants Review Committee (GRC) established by the Project. If an application is short-listed for potential funding, the respective applicant may be requested to provide additional information. The Project will assess proposals based on the following merit review criteria:

<b>Evaluation Category</b>	<b>Rating – Points</b>
Technical approach	45
Professional and management capacity	30
Past performance	20
Cost Effectiveness	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

These merit review criteria elements are described fully below.

### 1. Technical Approach

#### *Feasibility of Design & Technical Approach*

- The degree to which the proposed investigative reporting is responsive to the RFA and adequately addresses Project’s goals and objectives for this RFA;
- Demonstration of the understanding of the problems/issues which the RFA aims to address;
- The potential of the proposed investigative reporting to successfully and efficiently achieve the objectives outlined in Section II above;
- A clearly designed, well-thought, ambitious, and realistic plan to carry out the proposed investigative reporting;

### 2. Professional and Management Capability and Past Performance

- Professional and Management Capacity of the investigative journalist(s)

### 3. Cost Effectiveness

- The budget must be (i) complete and fully documented, (ii) reasonable, and (iii) allocated to appropriate budget categories;
- The budget must demonstrate a clear and direct relationship between proposed activities and the proposed use of funds;
- Proposed expenditures must be allowable and allocable to the Project.
- The Project must not be held liable for journalist(s) health, safety, or security during the implementation of the grant-supported activities.

## VII. AUTHORITY/GOVERNING REGULATIONS

The Support to Investigative Journalism awards are being made to eligible individuals as part of the Justice for All Program in Albania. The Program, funded by USAID under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, is administered by EWMI under Prime Contract no. AID-182-TO-16-00001 Basic guidelines and detailed procedures for the awards are contained in the USAID Justice for All Project Grants under Contract Manual.

The USAID Justice for All Project is required to ensure that all applicants receiving USAID grant funds comply with the guidance found in the regulations referenced above, as applicable to the respective terms and conditions of their grant awards.

## VIII. APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

The Project will accept proposals in Albanian and English. For those applicants that do not have the capacity to prepare the application in English please note that the Project will translate your submission. Templates to be utilized when developing the application are provided in Annex A and B. Applicants shall present their technical application and budget in the formats provided and shall follow the instructions and guidelines listed in these annexes.

Applications can be e-mailed, or hand-delivered to the Project office in Tirana using contact information provided below.

**Application Package:** The Application Package should include:

1. Annex A: The Application Form, signed by the applicant;
2. Annex B: A summary timeline demonstrating when proposed activities will take place and the proposed story will be completed.
3. Annex D: A summary budget including notes detailing the link between proposed activities and costs;
4. The CV(s) of the applicant(s) highlighting his/her/their experience in journalism and including references to other investigative reports prepared by the applicant(s).

**Application Package:** To download the application package, please see the RFA announcement at [www.ewmi.org](http://www.ewmi.org). Alternatively, please contact the Project at [grants\\_jfa@ewmi.org](mailto:grants_jfa@ewmi.org) for an application package. Please reference “RFA-JAG-2020-007” in your request.

**Clarifications:** Applicants should submit clarification requests via email to the Project at grants\_jfa@ewmi.org. The Project will issue clarifications to all interested journalists via e-mail.

**Proposals:** Applicants should submit their proposal and required documents via e-mail to the Project at grants\_jfa@ewmi.org. E-mails **must** reference “RFA-JAG-2020-007” in the subject line.

Applications will be accepted during the whole time, but no later than **17:00 on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020**. Late or unresponsive applications will not be considered.

Submitted proposals must be the original and sole work of the applicant(s). Plagiarism will result in disqualification from the grant competition.

The Project will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. It will not use this information for purposes other than proposal review and will not share it with other persons or institutions, except when required by Albanian law or requested by USAID.

Please note that in line with our donor coordination efforts, we will share the names of the applicants and a short description of their respective projects with other Albanian and international programs that support investigative journalism in Albania.

## **IX. LIST OF ANNEXES**

The following is a list of annexes that are an integral part of this RFA:

**Annex A** – Grant Application Form

**Annex B** – Project Implementation Timeline

**Annex C** – Budget Guidelines

**Annex D** – Project Budget Template

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