



## Request for Proposals

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) seeks an external researcher with expertise in critical, feminist epistemology to lead a research project focuses on adolescent girls and young women's (AGYW) sexual health rights (SHR) in the Dominican Republic (DR).

### Background

AJWS has a two-pronged strategy for building a more just and equitable world. We provide over \$38 million annually to 450 social justice organizations in 19 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, we advocate for laws and policies in the United States that will improve the lives of millions of people around the world and resist harmful policies that hamper our partners' abilities to exercise their rights. We do this by leading campaigns for human rights and by building relationships with Jewish leaders, elected officials and other supporters of human rights to promote justice and equality in developing countries.

We're an international development and human rights organization. This means that we go beyond short-term solutions and work to overcome the inequalities and injustices that cause poverty and oppression in the first place. Our grantees address immediate needs like food, shelter, jobs and health care, yet they also go deeper—advocating for human rights and building movements that can bring about lasting change. Our approach is rooted in empowerment—understanding that the people affected by a problem are best positioned to solve it. We work this way because we recognize that even the best tactics to end poverty will fail if human rights are denied and if local people do not have a voice in shaping solutions to the problems they experience. Our partners employ a host of tactics to empower their communities to advance justice, including but not limited to service delivery, community organizing, and advocacy at the community, nation and international levels. We commit ourselves to securing human rights that are at the roots of poverty and injustice in the developing world.

### Context

AJWS supports grassroots partners in the DR to reduce gender inequality, gender-based violence, and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as economic inequality and discrimination. Its work includes empowering adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) to be agents for improving their sexual health and rights (SHR). In 2017, to inform grassroots work with AGYW, AJWS funded one partner to conduct a local needs assessment of key adolescent and sexual reproductive rights issues and the nature of community-based and civil society efforts to address them. AJWS currently supports a number of community-based SHR organizations in barrios, bateys and rural areas to elevate the voices, leadership and priorities of marginalized adolescent girls in decision-making spaces and to promote cultural and social changes around adolescent girls' SHR. A core component of this

approach is girl-led and girl-inclusive change. AJWS is now looking to strengthen its strategic approach and expand the scope of its support of AGYW in the DR. This research project is aimed at informing AJWS's strategic expansion. AJWS currently supports 11 SHR grantees in the DR, with 5 specifically engaging AGYW.

## Research aims and questions

AJWS is supporting research to better understand grantmaking and programmatic approaches to working with adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) sexual health rights (SHR) in the DR. In particular, we are interested in understanding the best practices and lessons learned to overcoming barriers for AGYW models that incorporate a critical feminist approach (i.e. rights-based, gender transformative and empowering approach). AJWS is focused on understanding the ways AGYW interventions deal with context, intersectionality, and underlying root-causes in an effort to take a holistic approach to empowering and improving girls' lives. The expectation is that the research produced will have clear recommendations for specific tools and techniques for feminist approaches to AGYW SHR in the DR that emerge from local organization and activists dealing with adolescent SHR.

**Research questions** will be finalized with the consultant, and they may be further refined over the course of the research project. The first step after hire will be working with AJWS staff to focus the research and finalize research questions and appropriate methodologies. Overall, AJWS staff is interested in understanding:

1. **Actors:** Identify organizations (both AJWS partners and other organizations) in the DR that take a feminist, gender-transformative approach to SHR and map those working with AGYW by their main strategies.
  - a. How are feminist organizations working with AGYW and what are their visions for change?
  - b. Who are potential allies identified by these organizations?
2. **Approaches:** Understand the strategies organizations in the DR are using with AGYW and what is needed to better support their work.
  - a. What are best practices and model examples of feminist approaches to AGYW in SHR?
  - b. How are organizations working to understand girls' experiences and developing specific AGYW-centered strategies to create meaningful dialogue and engagement?
  - c. How have organizations moved beyond targeting girls to building girls' own ability to solve their problems?
3. **Sexuality:** Focused understanding of approaches to AGYW SHR that involve addressing sexuality and gender norms.
  - a. What are the main barriers feminist organizations face to working on controversial SHR topics and what are lessons learned for overcoming these barriers?
  - b. How are organizations working to confront negative community reactions to engaging AGYW around SHR? To confronting gender ideology discourse?
  - c. What are approaches for advocacy and dialogue with gatekeepers (e.g. religious leaders, government officials)?
  - d. How are organizations using strategic data and evidence as part of their advocacy and dialogue-building? What gaps in strategic information limit advocacy efforts?

## Research scope

The final research plan is to be determined by the research consultant. AJWS supports and values feminist, participatory approaches to research. We expect the research design may include: mapping exercises; literature reviews and review of AJWS documentation; qualitative interview with AJWS partners and staff; qualitative interview with leaders and experts engaging AGYW in the DR; convenings with partners to share emerging findings and generate learning and recommendations. We expect the research planning and process to be highly collaborative and iterative.

**Deliverables and Timeline**, with expected number of days per deliverable. It is anticipated that this assignment will cover a 5-month period. The research is expected to begin in September 2019 and finalized by February 2020 (final report writing may extend until March 2020).

- Iterative review of the literature to support research (4 days)
- Refined research questions, detailed study design, and work plan (3 days)\*
- Secure IRB approval (external Board) (1 day)
- Data collection instruments for primary data collection (2 days)\*
- Implementation of the field research (20 days)
- Co-organize with in-country staff and facilitate convening with partners to share emerging findings and as a source of learning (4 days)
- Meeting report from the convening (1 day)\*
- Meetings with AJWS staff throughout the process to share emerging findings and refine research (4 days)
- Analysis and draft report of findings (5 days)\*
- Final report, including executive summary (3 days)\*
- Presentation with AJWS staff to share findings (1 day)\*

\*denotes hard deliverables that will be expected to be finalized through an iterative review process with AJWS staff that may include up to 3 reviews of drafts. Drafts should be prepared in English and approved final reports should be submitted in both English and Spanish.

**Support** for this Consultancy will be provided by Margo Mullinax, Director, Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation (SLRE) The consultant and the SLRE Director will have regular weekly check-ins, a work plan with regular review and approvals along the way, in addition to the deliverables. Engagement with AJWS may occur through zoom and will not require in-person travel to NY.

**Budget** is based on 3-phases. The research design should be tailored to maximize learning within this budget. No additional costs will be covered outside of the budget and should be accounted for during budgeting and planning (e.g. travel, translation, subcontracting). AJWS will cover the costs associated with hosting a convening (e.g. space rental, food, participant travel).

1. Preparation for research, including engagement with AJWS, securing IRB, literature reviews, instrument design, and on-the-ground coordination: \$5,000
2. Implementation/conducting of the research, including field work, research convening, subcontracting of local consultants, as needed, and ongoing consultation with AJWS staff on emerging findings: \$20,000

3. Report writing (convening report and research report), including engagement with AJWS, and final presentations: \$5,000

## Interested applicants

### Consultant Qualifications

- Demonstrable and extensive experience producing high-quality, credible research using qualitative methodologies from a feminist lens (minimum of 10 years)
- Proven interviewing and facilitation skills
- Strong preference for research expertise related to AGYW SHR in the DR
- Experience working with grassroots organizations in the Global South; DR-based researchers will be prioritized during application review
- Demonstrated capacity to manage and organize all relevant logistics and activities to effectively carry out the assignment, producing deliverables on time and on budget
- Excellent verbal / written communication skills and strong reporting skills for non-technical audiences
- Ability to work effectively and efficiently in a highly consultative environment
- Fluency in English and Spanish is required

**Interested applicants** should submit the following:

- Cover letter explaining your interest in this assignment, relevant work experience, and how you meet the qualifications (no more than 2 pages)
- Proposed research design (no more than 2 pages)
- Curriculum Vitae
- Contact details for two references
- Sample of work that is most relevant to this assignment

Please submit these documents via email to Sophie Feintuch, Program Officer, Sexual Health and Rights [sfeintuch@ajws.org](mailto:sfeintuch@ajws.org), with 'DR AGYW SHR Research' in the email subject. **The deadline for applications is 23 Aug 2019.** Shortlisted consultants will be interviewed via Zoom, with anticipated start date in late September 2019.