

Request for Proposal

Consultant for a literature review on community participation in human rights advocacy

Overview of the International Human Rights Program

Wellspring's International Human Rights (IHR) program builds a global human rights field that advances the full range of human rights as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; deters abusers and holds individual, state, and non-state perpetrators accountable for rights violations; prioritizes marginalized people and their equality, autonomy, and access to power; and employs transformative approaches and strategies. IHR supports grantees to prevent human rights crimes; protect civilians in crises; ensure that human rights defenders can operate safely and legally; and hold individual, state, and economic actors accountable for rights violations.

Background to this consultancy

Wellspring's IHR Program grantees, advocating and working towards solutions, remedies, and accountability for human rights violations, deploy a range of advocacy tactics in combination. These include documentation and media exposure of abuses, policy and legal reform, demonstration of alternative policies and practice, pursuit of legal accountability through strategic litigation, the setting of norms to prevent human rights abuses, and generation of pressure on powerful actors to implement policies, change practice to fulfil rights and secure justice. A key cross-cutting Program imperative is for Wellspring's grantmaking to support the participation or mobilization of those most impacted by rights violations.

For example, within IHR's **Rights in Conflict and Crises grantmaking theme**, one of the Program's 5-year outcomes aims to ensure the creation of civic space for victim groups to mobilize and express what forms of redress would be meaningful to them in such fora as truth, reconciliation commission hearings and that victim groups are better able to influence the design, implementation, and monitoring of reparations processes. Therefore, cohorts of grantees work at the local and national levels to center the experience and participation of survivors of war crimes, and other injustices that occur during armed conflict, in advocating for remedy and solutions. The program's **Global Economy grantmaking theme** is also aimed at supporting and incorporating the perspectives of affected communities into legal and economic decisions directly affecting their lives. This includes communities and workers affected by international investments in Global South countries analyzing, documenting, and campaigning against tax avoidance practices and connecting communities harmed or threatened by international investments to communications, scientific, legal and research resources, and partners so they may more effectively advocate for the protection of their rights, livelihoods, and resources. Simultaneously, the current strategy for the IHR's **Disability Rights grantmaking theme** is committed to supporting targeted work to ensure that people with disabilities no longer face disproportionate risks of violence, abuse, and incarceration. To do so, the program is committed to investing in organizations of persons with disabilities, their connections with other human rights organizations, as well as ensuring that a greater diversity of voices of people with disabilities can influence agendas and social change.

IHR's emphasis on lived experience as part of the advocacy quest for solutions and remedy draws not only on the premise that participation and inclusion are normative imperatives but also on several assumptions

including that people most impacted by abuse better understand their experiences and situations and consequently that the solutions and remedies which they propose, advance, or contribute to will be more impactful and sustainable (also contributing to the prevention of abuse). We also hold the assumption that community involvement and participation may result in greater political agency in communities and their ability to advocate for themselves across issues.

There is a diverse array of social science research and other literature on the impact of centering lived experience in affecting social change and theories on the effectiveness of such participation and inclusion in achieving durable solutions.

Evaluation Objective and Purpose

The proposed literature review seeks to analyze and synthesize existing research with reference to the above detailed Wellspring grantmaking areas, as well as another field that has established research on community participation. Synthesizing available research will provide a foundation for the IHR program to better understand how the available evidence relates to its strategy around centering the lived experience of those most impacted by human rights abuse, incorporate key findings into strategy and grant craft discussion with grantees, field partners, and consider future directions for more rigorous research and/or evaluation of this research question and the IHR's approach to advancing more durable human rights progress.

Research Questions

The literature review should summarize and analyze the available social science research and relevant grey literature to identify evidence to date for the following questions in relation to the three thematic areas described above – i.e., Rights in Conflicts and Crisis, Disability Rights, and Global Economy.

In addition, the review should identify one more field within human rights in which the research and practice related to community participation is more advanced and answer the same set of questions for this field.

1. What is meaningful participation? What conditions enable meaningful participation?
2. What are some considerations to ensure meaningful participation of marginalized/under-represented groups?
3. What approaches/methods/tools are effective for facilitating meaningful participation?
4. What is the impact of such participation on outcomes, including but not limited to:
 - a. Whether participation is perceived as meaningful by participants
 - b. Greater ownership of the process and outcomes
 - c. Increased political agency in participants more broadly
 - d. More durable change
 - e. Outcomes that are more suited to the needs of the community
5. What community-led advocacy approaches and tactics are most effective in leading to changes in systemic processes?

The above are draft evaluation questions that Wellspring would like to discuss and refine with the consultant/team once the consultancy is procured.

Methodological Considerations

This literature review should comprise academic and relevant grey literature. Please note that at this stage, we would like to focus on understanding existing literature and defer primary data collection such as interviews with experts, key actors, and affected community members to future evaluations.

In your proposal, please include criteria you might use to identify the additional human rights field which is more advanced with regard to research and practice related to community participation. Additionally, please identify some preliminary sources for literature you propose to review as well as the rationale for selecting these data sources and considerations for equity. Please also describe how you plan to analyze literatures from these sources to draw systematic findings for this consultancy.

Please note that any information provided in the proposal is your intellectual property. It will be used only for the purpose of understanding your approach and expertise for literature review and how it may align with our needs for this project. Beyond the process of this RFP, we will not use any part of your proposal in the project.

Deliverables:

- A concise synthesis of key findings from the literature review
- An annotated bibliography of the identified literature
- Recommendations for potential future research or evaluations based on an analysis for gaps in the evidence base.

Once a consultant is selected, we will work with them to schedule regular check-ins and agree upon a reasonable set of midterm deliverables (e.g., a list of sources, a draft of initial findings, etc.) in addition to the final deliverables outlined here.

Budget and Timeline

We do not have a pre-allocated ceiling for this consultancy. Instead, we want to hear from you what you would consider to be a fair and reasonable budget to produce high-quality deliverable and meet the evaluation objectives. Our decision will be made solely on the strength of the technical proposal and the proposed budget will not be part of the decision-making criteria. Once we select the strongest proposal, we will work with the consultant to negotiate the scope and budget with mutual respect if necessary. For this purpose, we would appreciate if you could submit a technical proposal and a financial proposal (i.e., budget and budget narrative) separately.

We expect this research to be completed by March 31st, 2024. This is subject to discussion once the consultancy starts.

Desired Qualifications

We believe this consultancy would benefit from a team comprised of consultants with subject matter expertise in the specific thematic areas (i.e., rights in conflicts and crises, global economy, and disability rights). Applicants are welcome to submit a proposal as a team with the necessary expertise covered, but this is not required. Alternatively, we are open to proposals from those who will act as a team lead and who will recruit team members with the relevant subject matter expertise, in conversation with Wellspring staff, once the contract is in place. The lead researcher will possess:

- Experience with researching or implementing practices related to community participation in the field of human rights advocacy
- Relevant experience in designing and implementing research and/or strategic evaluation, preferably related to advocacy and policy change efforts in the human rights field
- Experience designing and conducting a literature review
- Experience managing a team for a research or evaluation project, ideally including the ability to manage sub-contracting and payment

In the case of entities/firms, we are open to working with both for-profit and non-profit organizations.

Next Steps

Interested consultants should submit a proposal to evaluation@wpfund.org with the subject line “Literature Review – Community Participation in Human Rights Advocacy” by October 31st, 2023. Elements of the proposal should include:

- Questions you may have about the scope or approaches for this RFP
- Technical proposal with proposed timeline
- Financial proposal with proposed budget and budget narrative (submitted separately from the technical proposal)
- CV and bios of proposed consultant(s)

Please note that the selection process is likely to take 6-8 weeks from the submission deadline. Thank you for your patience and feel free to reach out to us at evaluation@wpfund.org if you have any questions in the meantime.

WELLSPRING’S INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE OF RESPECT, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund believes we are strengthened by the diversity of consultants we work with. We welcome proposals from evaluators of all cultures, backgrounds, and experience levels.

We strongly encourage individuals or teams who are located in the Global South, and those from under-represented backgrounds in the field of evaluation to apply.