

## **MacArthur Foundation Announces First Winners Of New Creativity Award For Small Nonprofits**

**Chicago, IL (August 24, 2006)** – Expanding on its tradition of encouraging individual creativity and building effective institutions to help address some of the world’s most challenging problems, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation today announced that nine organizations in five countries will receive the first annual MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

These non-profit organizations have diverse missions – from finding permanent jobs for ex-offenders in Chicago to promoting police reform in Nigeria to saving the lives of mothers and their babies in India. Still, they have much in common. All are highly creative and effective organizations that have demonstrated significant impact in their fields. Each organization will receive up to \$500,000, a large sum given that their annual budgets are under \$2.5 million.

“Building and strengthening non-profit organizations has never been more important,” said MacArthur President Jonathan Fanton. “As the challenges facing our country and world grow even more complex, we look to trusted institutions to help us think about public issues and to galvanize action. As a society, we turn to non-profit organizations for guidance, inspiration, and concrete assistance. We trust them and we depend on them. They enrich our lives and strengthen our communities. These awards recognize nine extraordinary organizations and, we hope, allow them to unleash their inspiration and impact on a larger scale in the future.”

The MacArthur Foundation is already well known for its MacArthur Fellows Program, which celebrates individual creativity. Each year, 25 people in diverse fields receive a phone call out of the blue granting them the freedom to do their own work with a \$500,000 no-strings-attached grant. MacArthur also has a long history of building institutions – from Human Rights Watch, now the largest U.S.-based human rights organization, to the World Resources Institute, the environmental think tank, to Creative Commons, which has changed the way we think about copyright.

In making these new awards, the Foundation does not seek or accept nominations. To qualify, organizations must demonstrate exceptional creativity and effectiveness; have reached a critical or strategic point in their development; have budgets of less than \$2.5 million a year; show strong leadership and stable financial management; and have previously received MacArthur Foundation support, so that further legal review is not required.

Winners will be honored at an awards ceremony in Chicago on October 5. In conjunction with this ceremony, the Foundation will organize a series of seminars on the work of these organizations that will be open to other non-profit institutions, providing an important opportunity for mutual learning.

The 2006 recipients of the MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions are –

**Chicago Rehab Network - Chicago, Illinois:** This coalition of neighborhood-based development groups helps preserve affordable housing in a market experiencing rapid gentrification. Influential in the legislative and regulatory arenas, CRN helped create Chicago’s “density bonus,” allowing developers to build more housing in exchange for including more affordable units. The group maintains a comprehensive database to monitor the status of properties with federal housing assistance, working to keep legislators, tenants and advocates informed of properties with expiring contracts and to help them develop strategies to preserve at risk units. The \$350,000 MacArthur Award will help the organization create an operating reserve.

**CLEEN Foundation - Lagos, Nigeria:** Nigeria’s shift from military dictatorship to democracy has required the nation’s police force to change from a tool of an oppressive government to a public service agency. CLEEN has been a leader in that transformation by tracking complaints and holding police accountable for misconduct. CLEEN helped the police set up new oversight bodies and produced radio and television programming to transform the relationship between citizens and the police. The \$300,000 MacArthur Award will be used to establish a training facility to expand its reach.

**Fundar: Centro de Análisis e Investigación - Mexico City:** Fundar methodically tracks public spending related to human rights and reproductive health. Its research provides advocates with independent information to improve public policy. Fundar’s research helped bring about a 900 percent increase in earmarking of general health funds specifically for maternal health and an even larger hike in HIV/AIDS prevention funding. The \$500,000 MacArthur Award will be used to purchase and equip a permanent office in Mexico City.

**Independent Council of Legal Expertise – Moscow, Russia:** The Council was launched in 1993 as an informal group of 40 reform-minded legal scholars and practitioners dedicated to promoting democratic reform of the Russian legal system. Its members have helped develop key Russian legislation, including the nation’s Constitution, reforms of the court system, and the new criminal and civil legal codes. It also provides human rights training to journalists and the legal community. The \$250,000 MacArthur Award will help fund a permanent office in Moscow.

**Knowledge Ecology International – London, Geneva and Washington, D.C.:** This small, effective and agile team of professionals monitors and analyzes intellectual property policy developments around the world. It has played a key role in major international debates on intellectual property, including helping to pave the way for making essential medicines more available and affordable in developing countries. The \$500,000 MacArthur

Award will support start-up costs associated with becoming an independent nonprofit organization, as well as the creation of a cash reserve fund.

**North Lawndale Employment Network – *Chicago, Illinois***: Formerly incarcerated individuals are banned from many careers, and employers in sectors that do allow for their employment often do not want to hire them. For many ex-offenders seeking employment, nontraditional jobs and self-employment are the only feasible options. Each year, NLEN finds permanent jobs for 900 low-income neighborhood residents, including many ex-offenders. Its creative efforts include an urban beekeeping and honey production program that offers skills training and jobs to formerly incarcerated individuals. The \$400,000 MacArthur Award will help the Network retire debt and create a cash reserve.

**Peruvian Society for Environmental Law – *Lima, Peru***: This organization was founded in 1986 by a group of young Peruvian lawyers motivated by the biodiversity of Peru and concerned about the lack of formal regulatory and legal mechanisms to conserve it. The Society has helped develop the legal framework for national protected areas and a complementary private conservation program that promotes innovative concepts, such as conservation easements and ecosystem service payments. The \$325,000 MacArthur Award will help provide regional training, technical assistance and legal services for natural resource management and conservation.

**RealBenefits – *Boston, Massachusetts (national office)***: RealBenefits is a web-based service that allows community-based health organizations to reliably screen patients to determine their eligibility for public assistance programs, thereby improving health outcomes for low-income patients, increasing hospital revenues and reducing administrative and collection costs. It has expanded to offer screening for food stamps, energy assistance and the earned-income tax credit. RealBenefits now operates in Boston, Chicago and Miami. The \$500,000 MacArthur Award will provide expansion capital for sales and marketing, administrative and product support, and technology maintenance and upgrades.

**Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health (SEARCH) – *Maharashtra, India***: Based in the poorest semi-tribal district of Gadchiroli in the state of Maharashtra, SEARCH offers public health programs serving 86 villages with a total population of 100,000. One of its most successful programs trains village women to diagnose and treat newborns for common illnesses as well as educate and support mothers. During a seven-year period, the program reduced the neo-natal mortality rate by 70 percent, post-partum maternal morbidity by nearly 50 percent, and the need for emergency obstetrical care by 30 percent. The Indian government is now considering replicating the program in five other states. The \$300,000 MacArthur Award will help support a new research center to study maternal morbidity and young people's sexual and reproductive health in India.

Profiles of the winners and more information about the Foundation are available at [www.macfound.org](http://www.macfound.org). The MacArthur Foundation is a private, independent grantmaking institution dedicated to helping groups and individuals foster lasting improvement in the human condition. With assets of \$5.5 billion, the Foundation makes grants of approximately \$200 million each year.