**Amnesty International/Local Group 11 Proposal**

1. **Request**

The Justice & Dignity of Women of the Sahel(JDWS) is requesting $1,000 to implement protection and gender-based violence (GBV) programming in the Sahel of West Africa. This new organization will use this funding to conduct a program needs assessment of GBV prevention and response in Mali, the current organizational focus. This grant will also pilot support and medical assistance to one low-income, GBV survivor in Bamako in need of vagina fistulate repair surgery.

1. **Description of Organization & Staff**

Founded in 2019, this nascent organization aims to contribute to the promotion of the status of Sahelian women through full and active citizenship and wellbeing. The founder and president of JDWS, Aida H. Oualate, was born in Kayes, Mali and a survivor of the civil war in the north in 2012. As communication director for the Government of Mali, she worked to combat corruption in the financing of development initiatives in Mali. She holds a Masters of Business Administration in project management and has served as a liaison for cross-sector international organizations in both Mali and the United States. Aida currently resides in NYC. She is supported by three local volunteers in Mali, nine board members, one volunteer technical advisor, one IT technical advisor and a network of over 130 volunteers.

1. **Justification of Projection**

The current political instability, terrorism, conflict, poor rule of law, high gender inequality and high prevalence of GBV in Mali are all factors that justify the implementation and cost of this project proposal. GBV is defined as a means to control or restrain someone sexually, physically, socio-economically or emotionally. GBV is any harm perpetrated against a person based on power inequalities resulting from gender roles. Various forms of GBV are prevalent in Mali such as domestic violence, forced and early mariage and female genital mutilitation (FGM) among others. GBV causes medical complications (HIV, STDs, death), psychological problems, safety concerns, socio-economic vulernabilities and legal needs Due to the prevalence early childbirth, sexual violence and FGM in Mali, many women experience vaginal fistula and often require surgerical or medical care. In addition to the concrete needs of survivors, women are vulnerable to GBV due to the poor rule of law and regulatory frameworks. For example; the country does not currently have any laws criminalizing domestic violence and even existing criminal laws that should protect women from other types of GBV in Mali are not well-enforced. The Government of Mali has signed various human rights conventions and protocols including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW), the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others, however human rights violations continued to be perpetrated by terrorist groups, military actors, intimate partners and community members.. Therefore human rights and protection organizations such as Amnesty International are needed to hold state and non-state, armed and unarmed actors accountable in the conflict-affected North and in more peaceful areas of the country.

**VI. Previous Activities**

Since the organization’s launch in 2019, JDWS has implemented a few GBV prevention activities including policy and advocacy efforts in Mali and the United States while it completes its registration in Mali and with the IRS. The organization is currently registered in the state of New York. In February 2020, JDWS staff conducted community sensitivity and educational activities on domestic violence and traditional harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and its health consequences (such as vaginal fistula) in Mali. In the same month, two JDWS volunteers participated in a community sensitization and debate on domestic violence and its causes on a radio broadcast in Mali. In the United States, board members have conducted policy and advocacy work with members of the diplomatic corp and in the United Nations community to promote the status of women and prevent gender discrimination in the Sahel this year.

**V. JDWS Proposed Activities**

JDWS proposes to use Amnesty International Group 11 funds to conduct a GBV program needs assessment and to pilot a direct service component by providing medical and material assistance to one GBV survivor in Bamako who is low income and on the waiting list for this crucial surgery. As a new organization, JDWS will use these funds to conduct a needs assessment to inform JDWS activities through key informant interviews and focus group discussions with GBV survivors, local community-based organizations, international non-governmental organizations, government ministries and UN agencies. The organization proposes to collaborate with regional Amnesty International staff based in West Africa and with Local Group 11. With this new partnership, JDWS and Amnesty International will explore common ground, interest and capacity. To start, NYC-based members of JDWS will join Local Group 11 and head a new urgent action network focused on the Sahel (with a particular focus on Mali to start) which conduct advocacy efforts including letter writing and protests. If local members approve, JDWS staff will also come present on relevant topics based on Local Group 11 interest including Mali, Gender-based violence, women’s rights and updates on the use of Local Group 11 funds. As JDWS continues to grow, Local Group 11 members will be invited to participate and volunteer in various JDWS activities such as fundraisers and human rights advocacy efforts. Local group input will be sought on this collaboration. JDWS will also collaborate with Amnesty staff in West Africa and the country specialist where and when appropriate.