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MacArthur Honors 15 Nonprofits for Creativity and Effectiveness

February 16, 2012, 12:01 am

By Caroline Preston

A Mexican human-rights network is one of 15 winners of MacArthur foundation prizes.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation announced today the winners of its annual award for "creative and effective institutions," a counterpart to the fund's annual "genius" prize for individuals.

Fifteen nonprofits received grants ranging from $350,000 to $2.5-million.

The winners—nine from the United States and six from other countries—included organizations dedicated to analyzing Russian politics, pursuing investigative journalism, and supporting laws worldwide that enable civil-society groups to thrive.

As with the "genius" awards, the foundation does not seek or accept nominations. To qualify, groups must have received a previous grant from MacArthur.

Recipients must spend the money on ensuring their long-term success.

The Center for Responsible Lending will use its $2-million award to build an endowment and tackle new areas of consumer finance such as student loans. The Durham, N.C., nonprofit has been a crusader in the fight against predatory lending, helping to advance passage two years ago of a bill that expanded regulation of the financial system.

A Ugandan environmental charity, the Albertine Rift Conservation Society, will use its $350,000 prize to build an environmental training and information center that will serve Central and Eastern Africa.

The Moth—the nonprofit storytelling program that shared Malcolm Gladwell's tale of a wedding toast gone bad and Ishmael Beah's recounting of his time as a child soldier in Sierra Leone—will spend its $750,000 prize to expand its radio show and create an archive to share older content.

Other winners of the MacArthur prize are:

- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, a Chicago organization that fights poverty
- Carnegie Moscow Center, a think tank that studies Russia
- Center for Investigative Reporting, a nonprofit that produces investigative journalism
- Community Investment Corporation, which assists developers of rental houses in Chicago's

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The Giveaway provides news and analysis on how people and foundations are donating their money. Its authors, *Chronicle* staff members Maria Di Mento and Caroline Preston, welcome your feedback and story ideas. Connect with them on Twitter at @mdimento_cop and @cpreston.

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- Conservation Strategy Fund, which trains environmental activists in economics and policy analysis
- Crisis Action, an organization with headquarters in London that promotes peace and human rights
- Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University, which seeks to improve public policy on housing and economic development
- Girls' Power Initiative, a Nigerian organization that empowers and educates girls about their reproductive health
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, which monitors and seeks to improve the legal environment for nonprofits worldwide
- Moscow Helsinki Group, Russia's oldest human-rights advocacy group
- National Juvenile Defender Center, a group dedicated to protecting children's rights
- Red Nacional de Derechos Humanos "Todos los Derechos para Todos" (Red TDT) (National Human Rights Network "All Rights for All"), which monitors human-rights violations in Mexico

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