TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A COUNTERPART PROFESSIONAL TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF ACCESS AND USE OF ICT IN BUDGET TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Background

The control measures of the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) have had a deep impact on the budgeting process for fiscal year 2020. This has posed not only a challenge to transparent budget consultations but also set a precedence for a paradigm shift from conventional to unorthodox approach to participatory decision-making.

The COVID 19 control measures that include the lockdown, with people staying at home, and social distancing, have hampered the use of regular communication mechanisms, such as board room meetings, and one-on-one meetings. Accordingly, many MDAs, development partners, and non-state actors, were quick to respond to the current crisis by providing modern ICT technologies[1] including media platforms, (ie radio, television, the internet, mobiles,) and adopt other technological transformations (e.g. Facebook, twitter) and more so, e-conference facilities – allowing citizens to engage in 2020budget consultations as well as fundraising for measures to mitigate the COVID 19 impact. On the other hand, the COVID 19 control measures have set a precedence for an expedited *e-Government application (the transparency development objective* of NITA) needed for fast *and effective decision making; as well as improvement in efficiency and transparency in undertaking government business.*

Now more than ever, Ugandan citizens need to be able to understand government decisions, especially for the 2020/21 budget. Citizens want to be able to participate in decision-making because many of the COVID-19 control measures or decisions that have been made by their responsible authorities now affect them very concretely and personally. The solutions we find in times of COVID-19 will open up possibilities for stronger and more inclusive public decision making when the pandemic is over. As the COVID-19 crisis persists, it has become clear that both central and local governments will need to harness media platforms, technological tools and solutions to engage citizens to further enhance budget transparency and accountability. The merging question is *what would be the definition of a transparent and reliable government in times of crisis and how can it be made a reality?*

Current Status of e-Government Services

---

[1] ICT, as defined in the Information & Communication Technologies consists of hardware, software, networks, and media for collection, storage, processing, transmission, and presentation of information (voice, data, text, images).

The Government, through Ministry of Finance and Planning and Economic Development, is committed to pursue better functioning and transparent public financial management (PFM) which is underpinned by access and use of effective and efficient communication technologies, including management information systems. The Uganda PFM Reform Strategy, (July 2018 – June 2023) elaborates a comprehensive, strategic, and coordinated effort [2] to strengthen the governance of ICT systems [3] for decision-making and accountability, including collaboration with other agencies to strengthen network connectivity. The support to adoption and consolidation of E-government services, including migration and use of common platforms and services, is coordinated by NITA-U[4].

However, the adoption of e-government services has been varied as indicated in the Table below. It is evident that the access and use of digital platforms has to be enhanced to provide for e-government services, especially in the local governments.

Element of e-Government	**Status**
Use of Digital Platforms to provide government services	• Half of MDAs (50.7%) offer e-Government services via the • web, 19.5% via SMS and 13% using mobile applications. • However, government needs to create more awareness and encourage new use of e-Government services. • Only 28.6% of MDAs have adopted cloud computing services with email as the most adopted cloud service, outpacing storage& software services
ICT Use Optimization	• One third of the total MDA workforce (37%) routinely use computers. • Less than a quarter (22.5%) of MDAs routinely use the Internet. • The low levels of routine use are attributed to inadequate number of computers, procuring insufficient internet bandwidth to serve all employees, poor internal network infrastructure, lack of adequate ICT skills and knowledge among employees.
ICT Personnel in MDAs	• The proportion to total work force is 1.9% is very low compared to the need for e-government. • gender bias among ICT person el (31.2% female vs. 68.8% male)

[2] In particular, reform activities will aim to improve the integration of the various standalone accountability systems and provide stronger IT security and management. This will also involve : consolidation of e-budgeting mechanisms (PBB tool), and introducing a cross-government e-payment gateway, rolling out e-Procurement and to complete the roll-out of IFMS to all remaining entities in order to remove manual processes.

[4] National Information Technology Authority is implementation a Strategic Plan -- covering facilities for the following : These include (i) an application and data integration platform, (ii) common internet and connectivity infrastructure and hosting services through a national data centre, and (iii) shared services such as the unified messaging and collaboration systems, short message service (SMS) platforms and e-Payment systems

Affordability of IT infrastructure	MDAs report the high cost of the Internet and insufficient bandwidth (60.6% and 54.5% respectively) as the major obstacles to wider use of the Internet for MDA work
Source: *Extracted from* recent review of Uganda's ICT development status and trends by NITA-U *and published in* ***NITA-Uganda*** **- Strategic Plan 2018/19 – 2022/23 – ""Lives transformed through e-service delivery."**	

Overall and Specific Objective

The overall objective of the assignment is to examine the capacities of LGs and CSOs to adopt ICT in budget transparency, participation, monitoring and accountability and make suggestions to improve e-government services for effective and efficient budgetary decision-making in local governments.

The specific objectives will include:

1. To determine the impact of Covid-19 Control measures on the procedures and processes for the budgeting for 2020/21 budget as well as dissemination of information by districts and NGOs.
2. To examine the level of awareness of the scope, role and value of ICT in conducting government business, especially budgeting and accountability, among district staff, CSO and policy makers (councillors).
3. To determine the access and use of ICT in budget preparation, execution, reporting and accountability in the districts and lower levels of government-focusing on the existing technologies, functionality and views on ICT use optimization.
4. To examine the current capacity of local government to support e-governance focusing on the number and level of competence of ICT personnel.
5. To take stock of the existing ICT equipment and logical support or infrastructure, identify logistical difficulties and gaps that need to be addressed. The infrastructure could include power supply, telecommunications.
6. To submit recommendations for both government and non-government organizations to help to mobilize, among other the ICT competent staff, logistical support and enhanced ICT optimization.

Description of the assignment

ACODE is desirous of enlisting the services of consultants to assess the assess the level of access and use of icy in budget transparency and accountability at local government level.

Scope of work

- Developing an appropriate study methodology including development of data collection tools
- Data collection
- Analysis of data

- Report writing

Duration

The tasks to be undertaken will be completed within 40 working days spread over **two months** effective from the signing of the contract.

Expected outputs

The Principal- investigator will be expected to produce;

- An inception report indicating study methodology and data collection tools
- Draft research report
- Final research report

Confidentially

The data is property for ACODE and shall not be shared with any third party without ACODE's consent.

Submission deadline

Interested consultants should send an email to the CBEG Project Manager at g.bogere@acode-u.org and copy to skavuma@acode-u.org , attaching expression of interest and CV. The deadline for the expression of interest is close of business Friday 18th September 2020.