



COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COMESA)

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST CONSULTANCY FOR PREPARATION OF PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT (PCR) FOR 50 MILLION AFRICAN WOMEN SPEAK NETWORKING PROJECT (50MAWSP)

(INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT)

1. Background

1. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is the largest regional economic community (REC) in Africa, with a combined population of more than 560 million people in its 21 Member States, and a combined GDP over USD 600 billion. Although a primarily trade-focused regional bloc, gender equality and economic empowerment of women are part of COMESA's priority areas to enhance sustainable socio-economic development in the region. The work of COMESA on gender equality and women empowerment is supported by the Treaty, Gender Policy, and the African Union Agenda 2063 and Global Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development among others.

2. The East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. Its six Partner States are: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda. The EAC is home to 172 million citizens, of which over 22% is urban population. With a land area of 2.5 million square kilometers, it has a combined Gross Domestic Product of over US\$ 172 billion (EAC Statistics, 2017).

3. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on May 28 1975 by the treaty of Lagos. ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. The member countries which make up ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.

4. As a continent, Africa has high rates of entrepreneurship, with many countries having almost equal participation between men and women. Women business owners in the African context, however, face gender-specific barriers such as limited access to information and networking opportunities, lower levels of education and business training, weak property rights that deprive them of collateral and tangible assets, legal barriers that impede their economic activities and cultural barriers that discourage women from thriving as entrepreneurs. The consequence is that women have challenges accessing financial and non-financial services and so the size and growth of their businesses suffer.

5. In September 2016, COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly implement a project called the 50 Million African Women Speak Networking Platform Project (50MAWSP) to address some of the challenges experienced by women in business in their member/partner States and Africa as a whole with support from the African Development Bank (AfDB). The three RECs coordinated by COMESA jointly implemented the project. Implementation of the project kicked-off in June/July 2017 after the recruitment of project staff.

6. The objective of the project is to contribute to the economic empowerment of women through the provision of a digital networking platform to enable women to access information on financial and non-financial services.

7. The 50 Million African Women Speak Platform was developed and made available through www.womenconnect.org for women and services providers to use in November 2019. The platform provides women with a basic information service on aspects such as how to start/register a business, as well as opportunities to access information on business training, mentorship, affordable financial services/products and locally-relevant business information, while allowing them to build their networks, benefit from peer-to-peer learning and create knowledge communities, in their countries and across borders. Ultimately, as the name suggests, it is expected that the Platform will be used by approximately 50 million women on the African Continent.

8. The project is implemented in 38 countries belonging to COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS. Thirty-six¹ participating countries have set up a Country Team made up of representatives from the public and private sectors as well as civil society to spearhead national project activities. Specifically, the country teams are comprised of representatives from the ministries responsible for Gender, Trade and ICT among others; institutions responsible for enterprise development, financial institutions, women associations and membership-based entities working with women in business. The country teams are supported by national project focal point persons in the project

¹ No country teams were established in two countries – Libya and Somalia due to challenges beyond the control of the project.

host ministries and, National Content Developers. It is this structure at the national level that works in tandem with the regional bodies (COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS) to generate content for the platform, as well as sensitize the targeted users about the platform's existence and benefits.

9. At continental level, the platform was officially launched in November 2019. National launches in all COMESA/ECOWAS Member States and EAC Partner States are planned, as a sub-component of a broader drive to create awareness about the platform and encourage users to sign up and access the services.

10. The project is expected to end on 31st December 2020 as stipulated in the grant agreement between AfDB and the RECs. It is against this background that COMESA in collaboration with EAC and ECOWAS wishes to hire the services of an individual consultant to conduct an assessment of the project and draft an independent project completion report (PCR).

2. The report should assess the completion of implementation of all project components, namely: support for ICT equipment & application, support for platform, related statistical database, content development, and target services for women entrepreneurs, support for back office/in-country resources and project management/capacity building components. The PCR will highlight achievements, challenges, gaps/emerging issues, lessons learnt and propose key interventions that are in line with project objectives, targets, ownership and sustainability. The project completion report will be used to inform the AfDB, member States and the three RECs on the achievements of the project, challenges experienced, lessons, gaps/emerging issues that require support. Further, the consultant will assist the PIU to develop a proposal for the second phase of the project. **Objective of the Assignment**

11. The overall objective of the consultancy services is to undertake the preparation of project completion report for the 50MAWS project. The PCR will assess and highlight the achievements of the project, challenges, lessons learnt, gaps/emerging issues, sustainability aspects and suggest recommendations and interventions for the second phase for future enhancements of the platform.

3. Methodology

12. The consultancy will adopt a mixed method with a consultative and participative approach. It will include field visits where applicable, conducting virtual meetings with RECs gender departments, resource mobilization units, PIUs, Ministries responsible for women affairs and coordinating ministries and undertake desk review work. The consultant will also use focus group discussions, key informants' interviews, and conduct discussions with platform design service provider and women entrepreneurs to obtain needed information.

13. The consultant will conduct strategic meetings with COMESA, EAC and ECOWAS Executive Management and the AfDB Task Team Leader to obtain strategic recommendations and interventions.

14. The PCR should then lead to concrete recommendations that would assist the Bank and the RECs in formulating priorities for future strategic interventions to enhance and sustain existing and new initiatives on economic empowerment of women using ICTs at regional and national level.

4. Scope of Work

15. The work of the consultant will include, but not be limited to the following:

4.1 Management of PCR processing:

- i. Liaise with lead Project Coordinator and TTL and assess the status of PCR preparation of the project; and
- ii. Follow up with project coordinator and TTL on PCR processing (constituting of teams, undertaking missions, data/information collection, drafting of reports and internal clearance etc.) to ensure they are prepared in good time.

4.2 Data Collection, Assessment and PCR drafting:

- i. Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the completed project;
- ii. Review the Regional Integration Strategy Papers (RISPs), Gender Strategies, Gender policies for each REC;
- iii. Review appraisal reports, supervision reports, aide memoires, steering committee reports, PCRs/reports prepared by RECs, progress quarterly reports, platform design documents, hardware infrastructure documents and any other relevant documents;
- iv. Participate and hold virtual dialogue meetings with the three PIUs, development partners, beneficiaries and other relevant Government institutions;
- v. Collect pertinent information for undertaking financial and economic analysis of the project;
- vi. Assess the overall socio-economic cost benefit of the operations;
- vii. Assess the performance of the various stakeholders including the Bank, borrower/recipient, member States;
- viii. Draw key lessons learnt from the implementation to be the Bank's interventions and capture them in the Bank's PCRs;
- ix. Prepare the PCRs in the proposed Bank format (attached to the ToR);
- x. Prepare a proposal for the second phase of the project that the executive management of the three RECs implementing the project have proposed to the Bank; and
- xi. Perform any other duties relating to the assignment as may be assigned by the project lead coordinator and TTL.

5. Work Plan, Deliverables

16. This assignment is expected to be conducted over a period of two months (8 weeks) commencing **Mid October 2020**. The assignment will be spread over a period of two months Mid- October 2020 –15 December 2020.

5.1. Deliverables and Timeline

17. The Consultant shall submit the following Reports to the project and Bank within the specified period indicated below:

- i. The **Inception Report** will be submitted within two weeks of commencement of the assignment and shall summarize the Consultant's initial observation including understanding of TORs and description of planned deliverables;
- ii. The **Draft Final Project Completion Reports (PCRs) on the project** will be submitted within six weeks (1.5 months) of commencement and shall include complete review of the respective 50MWS platform activities with relevant chapter contents in accordance with the PCR format;
- iii. Draft proposal for the second phase of the project drawing priorities and strategic interventions from the information collected for the project completion report will be submitted at the same time at the PRC in the format that will be provided;
- iv. The **Final Report** will be submitted within two months for approval by the RECs/and the Bank (AfDB). The Final PCRs shall incorporate all revisions deemed appropriate by the Consultant after receipt of comments on draft from RECs and the Bank.; and
- v. Final proposal for the second phase of the project will be submitted by December 30, 2020.

5.2 Reports

18. After taking into account the comments of the Bank, the consultant will prepare the final Report in PDF format and submit the source files of the report such as maps, pictures, etc. for submission to the RECs and Bank. Typical annexes in the report include but are not limited to the following:

- i. Terms of reference of the review; and
- ii. List of documents consulted.

6. Required qualifications and experience

19. The Bank seeks highly motivated expert with outstanding credentials and a strong record of professional accomplishment. In addition, the Consultant must possess:

- i. The consultant should have at least a master's degree in the field of Business Administration, Gender Studies, IT Project Management or Economics or any other related field;
- ii. At least 10 years proven track record in the ICT sector particularly in ICT policy and regulation, infrastructure development and wide knowledge of provision of e-Services/digital services, with very good understanding of the ICT industry and the gender equality and women empowerment landscape;
- iii. Experience in project cycle activities, monitoring and evaluation and preparation of completion and impact evaluation reports of ICT Infrastructure and strategy projects;
- iv. Proven experience in national and cross-border ICT project design and management as it contributes to trade facilitation and socio-economic development;
- v. Demonstrated capability in preparation of reports. Experience of working with international financial institutions (IFIs) or with bilateral aid and development agencies, including familiarity with their financing arrangements for grant and/or loan support;
- vi. Excellent interpersonal skills and demonstrate ability to interact with a range of stakeholders including senior officials from the Government, private sector and other stakeholders;
- vii. Rigorous, results-oriented individual with strong analytical skills, sound business judgement and the ability to identify needs and constraints, to set priorities and translate them into action;
- viii. Ability to work alone as well as in a team and coordinate the related activities;
- ix. Over and above these technical requirements, this assignment requires the utmost professionalism, ethics and confidentiality;
- x. A good working knowledge of the English Language and the use of Microsoft Word, Excel and Power Point; and
- xi. Fluent in written and spoken English and knowledge of Arabic, French and or Portuguese will an advantage.

7. INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

20. Period of validity of Proposals

The Proposals shall remain valid for ninety (90) days after the closing date of Proposal submission.

In exceptional circumstances and prior to the expiry of the original proposal validity period, COMESA may solicit the applicants' consent to an extension of the period of validity.

The request and the responses thereto shall be made in writing.

21. **Amendments of Proposal documents**

At any time prior to the deadline for submission of proposals, COMESA, for any reason, whether at its own initiative or in response to a clarification requested by a prospective Applicant, may modify the Proposal Documents by issuing an addendum.

All addenda shall be posted on the COMESA website <http://www.comesa.int>. All applicants wishing to be notified of any addenda should provide to COMESA the applicants name and email address.

In order to afford prospective Applicants reasonable time in which to take the amendments into account in preparing their offers, COMESA may, at its discretion, extend the deadline for the submission of proposals.

22. **Format of application**

The Applicant shall submit their proposals to the

Chairperson - Procurement Committee,
COMESA Secretariat,
Ben Bella Road,
P.O. Box 30051,
Lusaka, Zambia,
Attention: Procurement Unit

The proposals should be sent to the chairperson via email procurement@comesa.int not later than **5th October 2020** at 15.00 hrs Lusaka .

23. **Technical Queries**

For any technical queries related to the terms of reference, kindly contact or send written enquiries to the following email address: procurement@comesa.int

Note that the deadline for submitting questions is **30th September 2020** at 15hrs Lusaka Time.

24. **Ownership of Proposals**

COMESA retains ownership of all proposals received under this call for applications.

25. **Negotiation and Finalization**

After the selection of the best proposal and notification to the selected institution, COMESA will commence negotiations with the company for purposes of concluding an agreement for the provision of the services.

26. **Award of Contract**

Prior to expiration of the period of proposal validity, COMESA will inform the successful applicant/s of provisional award of grant pending due diligence to be carried out on the applicant/s by COMESA. A final award will be made subject to the results of the due diligence.

COMESA reserves the right to wholly or partially reject or award the consultancy to any applicant and has no obligation to award the consultancy to the highest ranked

applicant.

COMESA also reserves the right to annul the Proposal process and reject all Proposals at any time prior to award of consultancy, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Applicant(s).

27. Cancellation of the Call

In the event of cancellation of the call, applicants will be notified in writing of the cancellation and informed of the reasons for cancellation.

If the call is cancelled before the outer envelope of any proposal has been opened, the unopened and sealed envelopes will be returned to the applicants.

28. Ethical conduct

COMESA requires that Applicants observe the highest standard of ethics during the selection and execution of such contracts. For this provision, the COMESA defines the terms set forth below as follows:

- a) "Corrupt practice" means the offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting of anything of value to influence the action of an officer of COMESA in the tendering process; and
- b) "Fraudulent practice" means a misrepresentation of facts to influence the tendering process to the detriment of the Purchaser.

COMESA will reject a proposal for award if it determines that a Applicant has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities in competing for the contract in question.

29. Confidentiality

Information relating to evaluation of proposals and recommendations concerning awards, shall NOT be disclosed to the Applicants who submitted the proposals or to other persons not officially concerned with the process, until the winning firm has been notified that it has been awarded the contract.

30. Corrupt or Fraudulent Practices

COMESA requires that Applicants/Suppliers/Firms observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and executions of such contracts.

For the purposes of this provision, COMESA defines the terms set forth below as follows:

- (a) "corrupt practice" means the offering, giving, receiving or soliciting of anything of value to influence the action of a public official in the procurement process or in contract execution: and
- (b) "fraudulent practice" means a misrepresentation of facts in order to influence a procurement process or the execution of a contract to the detriment of the COMESA and includes collusive practice among Applicants (prior to or after proposal submission) designed to establish proposal prices at artificial non-competitive levels and to deprive COMESA of the benefits of free and open competition.

31. Financial Proposal - Standard Bidding Form

Bidders are advised to use the standard tender Form below as sample format and modify it to cover all relevant costs or charges.

There will be no price variation tender.

Bidders are also advised to disclose any other relevant information on a separate sheet of paper.

Financial proposal Form

	AMOUNT IN USD
TOTAL PROFESSIONAL FEE	
OTHER RELEVANT EXPENSES	
VAT AND ALL OTHER TAXES	EXCLUSIVE

Amount in words: _____

Submitted by:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

END