Terms of Reference

Development of a Government's Communication, Information Technology and Outreach Strategy

Background

The Government of Suriname has identified transparency as one of the most important principles of good governance, and refers to this principle in the Multi-Annual Development Plan (in Dutch: MOP) 2001-2005: '*Transparency, originating from an open attitude from the Government with respect to dialogue, discussion and understandability of policy measures*'. The MOP furthermore announces the elaboration of a Law on Transparent Governance, regular and reliable governmental information and outreach activities, and permanent and constructive dialogue with social partners.

At the same time it has been acknowledged that the current communication, information technology, connectivity and outreach capacity of the Government, both internally (within the Government) as well as externally (with social partners and civil society) needs strengthening. Governmental spokespersons have asked for more appropriate systems to enable their performance, and private media institutes, reflecting public opinion, have also voiced their concern on the limited amount and quality of information on Government's policies and activities.

Suriname has a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual society of which the inhabitants live mainly in the capital Paramaribo (approximately 60% of the total population of 450,000), coastal districts (25%) and Interior (15%). Apart from 2-3 radio stations and 2-3 community radio stations, all other media are located in the capital and do neither reach remote districts nor the interior.

This consultancy aims at developing, in a participatory and broadly consultative manner, an appropriate communication, information technology and outreach strategy for the Government of Suriname, which will provide recommendations for further targeted activities. This strategy will include an assessment and strategy for Internet and Intranet connectivity within the Council of Ministers, with the objective of promoting governmental efficiency, accountability and transparency by making information available and accessible for the Government and the general public.

Objectives

The objectives of this consultancy are:

1. To develop, in a participatory and broadly consultative manner, a **Communication, Information Technology and Outreach Strategy** for

the Government of Suriname, including a budget detailing the costs for its implementation. The strategy will lay out appropriate ways and means for effective communication and outreach roles and functions of Government authorities, spokespersons, the National Information Service and other actors. Considerable attention will be paid to the importance and immediate need for the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

2. To conduct a **Needs Assessment**, including an assessment of the current status of ICT usage within the Government, with a view of improved usage of Information Technology by the Government of Suriname for efficient 'horizontal' interaction, public information and transparent governance, and identify priority actions to be undertaken to enhance Government's capacity to implement the recommendations arising from this assessment.

3. To deliver an initial set of **training activities** with respect to governmental communication strategies, good governance and transparency, and conduct a practical, interactive training workshop for improving communication skills with governmental and non-governmental communication practitioners.

1. The Communication, Information Technology and Outreach Strategy will address, among others:

   a. Government's vision and objectives of governmental communication, information technology and outreach. Particular emphasis will be laid on obtaining the input of the President and Vice President of the Republic in this visioning exercise. The vision will take into account the importance of communication and information technology in promoting and strengthening national ownership of the country's development and future, and its importance in underscoring the necessity and urgency of improved Internet access/connectivity for Suriname; in particular in bridging the private and public sector, nationally, regionally and internationally. The relevance and active participation of civil society, private sector as well as public sector employees in developing and implementing this strategy will be stressed.

   b. Appropriate means and available resources to provide accurate and timely information to citizens and other social partners.

   c. Appropriate means and necessary (as compared to available) resources to establish a system of 'horizontal' information exchange within the Government, with emphasis on the potential use of an Intranet between Government offices and other appropriate uses of current Information and Communication Technology for the fluent exchange of all relevant information, including finance, budget and development planning information.

   d. Appropriate means and necessary resources to seize opportunities offered by e-governance to improve productivity or improve competitiveness given Suriname's small economy and current isolated position geographically, culturally and linguistically.

   e. The availability of resources within the international community (organizations and/or private sector) to assist Suriname in the preparation and implementation of its communication, information technology and

outreach strategy.

2.　　The Needs Assessment, to be conducted in a broadly participatory manner, will address, among others:

   a. A description of current practices and mechanisms regarding the provision of governmental information.
   b. Needs and opportunities for the installation of an Intranet permitting the fluent exchange of information between the Ministry of Finance and other ministries thus facilitating financial and budgetary planning, monitoring, efficient implementation and evaluation.
   c. Needs and opportunities for E-Governance, to include a needs assessment for Internet connectivity and its benefits, information technology infrastructure, laws and regulations, participation of all stakeholders in planning, preparation and implementation.
   d. A description of the information technology needs of media and other sectors of civil society, and some common proposals to address those needs.
   e. Identification of innovative, realistic and cost-effective actions associated with the implementation of the abovementioned strategy.
   f. The appropriateness of use of non-traditional communication mechanisms for remote rural (Interior) areas, and proposals to this end.

3.　　The training activities will include, among others:

   a. Training on information technology, communication and outreach within the framework of good governance and transparency, with a view for practical application of the acquired knowledge and skills in the eventual implementation of the strategy.
   b. A practical, interactive training workshop for improving communication skills for governmental and non-governmental communication practitioners.

Expected outputs

Expected outputs of the consultancy are:

1. A draft Communication, Information Technology and Outreach Strategy, to be presented for consideration and adoption by the Government of Suriname. The strategy will contain:
   a. Government's vision and objectives of governmental communication, information technology and outreach;
   b. Appropriate ways and available resources for communicating, including on national policies, with the general public, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, international partners and foreign governments. Particular attention will be paid to the communication strategy on the achievement of the international Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the objectives mentioned in the Multi-Annual Development Plan 2001-2005 of the Government of Suriname. The strategy should

address issues such as:

- How the Government can best interact with the media, civil society, and different levels of the Government;
- How parliamentarians, civil society, local government, etc. are briefed about the central Government's activities;
- How public debates can be initiated and monitored;
- How Parliament debates are monitored and how follow-up is being given to the recommendations from those debates;
- How the work of existing governmental spokespersons, press officials and speechwriters can be improved;
- How international development partners can get access to key governmental policy information and decisions;
- How to handle public inquiries efficiently;
- How the Internet and other information technology means can be utilized to the maximum advantage;
- How to ensure the flow of information during crisis situations.

    c. Appropriate means and necessary resources to establish a system of 'horizontal' information exchange within the Government, with emphasis on connectivity of all Government ministries to the ministry of Finance to promote more transparent communication and government while improving accountability.

2. A Needs Assessment Report. This report will contain, among others:

    a. A description of current practices and mechanisms regarding the provision of governmental information;

    b. A description of the training needs for government officials in communication and information sharing and dissemination;

    c. A description of the information technology needs of the Cabinet of the President, the Cabinet of the Vice President, the Ministry of Finance and other ministries regarding the implementation of an Intranet and E-Governance facilities;

    d. A description of the information technology needs of media and other sectors of civil society, and some common proposals to address those needs;

    e. Identification of innovative, realistic and cost-effective actions associated with the implementation of the abovementioned strategy. This action plan will make recommendations on needs such as: the revision of job descriptions, if necessary; training requirements for Government press officers, speechwriters and spokespersons; procurement of communication tools; the use of electronic tools for communications and archiving;

    f. The appropriateness of use of non-traditional communication mechanisms for remote rural (Interior) areas and the relevancy of cultural and linguistic sensitivities and particularities in communication and outreach, and proposals to this end.

3. A set of indicators that can be used for measuring progress in the implementation of the strategy and achievement of its objectives.

4. Reports of the training activities, to include recommendations on follow-up, if necessary.

Methodology and work plan

The elaboration of the strategy and the needs assessment will be carried out in a broadly consultative and participatory manner. The consultant/consultancy firm will consult with, among others:

      a. The Government of Suriname, in particular the Office of the President, the Office of the Vice President, the Ministers of Finance, Planning and Development Cooperation (PLOS), Home Affairs, Labor, Technological Development and Environment (ATM), Transport, Communication and Tourism (TCT), Regional Development and other Ministries as appropriate

      b. The National Information Service (Nationale Voorlichtingsdienst, NVD)

      c. The Information Service of the National Assembly of Suriname

      d. The Association of Governmental Spokespersons, an association in the course of establishment with the objective of improving governmental information to the public

      e. The Association of Journalists in Suriname

      f. Media companies, including companies or non-governmental organizations working in the districts and Interior, and community radio stations

      g. Civil society organizations, including organizations representing or working with the indigenous and maroon peoples of the Interior

      h. Private sector representatives.

In carrying out the assigned tasks, the consultant/consultancy firm will work closely together with/will include in the consultants' team a local consultant or firm who will participate in all activities and provide guidance on specific or particular local situations and contexts.

In developing the work, the consultant/firm will ensure that the strategy to be developed takes into account the information technology, communication and outreach needs as they relate to ongoing policy development dialogues regarding the following issues, among others:

- Suriname's political constellation and history, i.e. its broad consociational government which has specific communication needs and challenges
- Public Sector Reform
- Institutional capacity for monitoring and planning
- Sector wide approach and budgetary support for development
- Medium term macro-economic framework
- International and regional trade agreements and their impacts on the country
- HIV/AIDS, with special emphasis on stigmatization and discrimination, prevention and the involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS
- Environment, with special emphasis on biological diversity, cultural diversity, climate change and waste management.

The duration of the consultancy will be five months. The consultant/firm will produce

and discuss an inception report, including a work plan for the five months, with UNDP and relevant government officials within 5 days after starting the first mission to Suriname. The consultant/firm will also produce a mid-term report outlining progress made so far, obstacles encountered and recommendations for the duration of the further consultancy, and a final report that will include the outputs described above. The counterparts from Suriname may request further briefings from the consultant/firm at any other time, as appropriate.

Qualifications of the consultant/consultancy firm

Expertise and verifiable experience with regard to:

- Strategic communication
- Development of communication strategies for governments of developing countries
- Preparation, planning and implementation of information technology strategies
- Official press relations
- Use of most recent and advanced information technology
- Public sector reform, transparency, accountability and good governance
- Communications in multi-cultural situations and in difficult-to-reach areas
- Knowledge of Dutch would be an asset.

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