Call for Applications

Consultancy: Research on Public Participation in law and policy making in Malawi

Project Information

Public participation in policy making is a fundamental element of democracy that is crucial in ensuring accountability and eliminating marginalization and discrimination in decision making processes. The Malawi Constitution (Article 7&8) mandates the government “to initiate and enact policies and legislation that embody the express wishes of the people” and to “ensure that deliberations on laws reflect the interests of the people.” According to the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (2016-18) Commitment No. 2, although mechanisms exist for engaging citizens in democratic processes through regular elections, participation in local government development planning and consultations on policy frameworks, the level of civic participation in Malawi is low and opportunities to participate in consultations on policy frameworks are limited. Apart from these limited consultations, there is lack of mechanisms for providing feedback on the performance of government. As a result, the policies and decisions made by government do not adequately reflect the issues raised by citizens and fail to incorporate the most pressing needs of local communities. To this end, the Government of Malawi has committed to foster effective participation and engagement between citizens and decision-makers through a number of long-term initiatives such as the country’s development strategy - Vision 2020, the National Decentralization Policy and the Public Service Charter, which commits the government to “ensure mechanisms of participation and consultation involving the public, and all other stakeholders are effectively put in place.”

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) is soliciting applications for a local consultant to conduct research on the current framework governing public participation in law and policy making processes in Malawi, with the aim of identifying opportunities to enhance effective civil society engagement in governance and decision-making processes. The research will examine the extent to which existing regulatory frameworks provide an enabling environment for citizen engagement at the
national and local government levels and identify the gaps and practical obstacles that hamper civic participation in law and policy formulation. The research will contribute to innovative strategies to improve civil society influence and oversight in the implementation of laws and policies affecting public participation.

ICNL promotes the freedoms of association, assembly, and expression and supports civil society, civic participation, and philanthropy in countries around the world. The proposed research will be conducted under a collaborative project entitled PROTECT (Protecting Rights, Openness and Transparency - Enhancing Civic Transformation) implemented in partnership with Article 19, Hivos, and Internews. PROTECT is a DFID-funded consortium partnership for knowledge and learning in Malawi, Kenya and Myanmar aimed at countering shrinking civic space, easing pressure on independent media and infomediaries, and enhancing transparency through better civil society access to data and information. Specific interventions under PROTECT in Malawi will be geared towards empowering civil society organizations (CSOs), human rights defenders and infomediaries to hold government accountable with the aim of expanding and protecting civic space.

The Consultant will assist ICNL in carrying out the research, which will entail primary research and review of secondary sources to inform a comprehensive assessment of the relevant participation issues impacting on civic space. This research should identify the key gaps and challenges facing civic participation in law and policy making processes, especially for women and CSOs working on gender issues, and recommend innovative approaches or activities that can improve such citizen participation.

The scope of work will include, but is not limited to:

- Desk review of existing legal and institutional frameworks on public participation to assess whether these provide an enabling environment for civil society in line with international norms and best practice; and identify the regulatory policies that affect citizen participation and engagement in law and policy making.

- Bilateral interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders including, policy makers, legislators, civil society regulators and civil society actors/leaders and networks to: identify prevailing opportunities as well as the practical barriers that restrict effective citizens’ participation in law and policy making (especially for women and CSOs working on gender issues) and impede sustained engagement of civil society with government at both national and local levels, and;

- Analysis of the civil society landscape in Malawi to assess civil society’s capacity to engage constructively in law and policy making processes and ability to influence policy reforms to promote open and expanded civic space.
• Recommendations for practical strategies to; (i) address identified gaps and challenges to public participation, including creative approaches to empower civil society to engage sustainably with the government and (ii) enhance inclusive and participatory approaches targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups (especially women and CSOs working on gender issues) in decision making processes.

• Compilation of findings into a draft report to be submitted to ICNL and PROTECT consortium partners for review and incorporation of revisions, as necessary.

• Facilitation of the validation of the final report through a workshop with key civil society actors and policy makers, as agreed upon with ICNL.

ICNL anticipates that the consultancy may take up to approximately five weeks (i.e. forty days) to complete all work required.

Application Instructions

APPLICATION MATERIALS

To apply for this position, please send:

- CV
- Project outline of 1-2 pages that addresses:
  - Your qualifications (which should demonstrate how you meet the selection criteria listed below)
  - Your strategy for developing and implementing the research study including proposed scope of activities, timelines, and key stakeholders to engage to gather credible and substantive inputs.
  - Proposed deliverables
  - Your proposed budget based on the proposed activities as indicated above.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Compliance with application procedures;
- Demonstrable knowledge of the civil society sector in Malawi
- Substantial experience in conducting research tailored to civil society regulatory issues, civic space, human rights, and governance related topics
- Track-record of consulting services provided to Malawi civil society organizations
- Competitiveness of proposed rates and value for money.

Please contact us via email at africa@icnl.org should you have questions about the application process. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis until June 26, 2020.

Issuance of this solicitation does not constitute an award commitment on the part of ICNL, nor does it commit ICNL to pay for cost incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.