

## **INTERESTED BIDDERS, IT'S YOUR TIME. PLEASE COMPLY!**

Tanganyika is one of the Sub-Saharan African countries that conducts a census every ten years. The purpose of the census is to ensure that the government obtains a sufficient number of citizens with their various statuses. The government conducts censuses through its established agency, ITALIKA, in order to meet predetermined goals. The ITALIKA agency has been given the responsibility to carry out the exercise by allocating more than 11% of the total government budget for the first quarter of the financial year 2022/2023. With the allocated funds, preliminary preparations required the agency to purchase iPads to aid in the census, as, unlike previous censuses, this year's census was to be conducted using information and communication technologies. Throughout the course of history, information technology has consistently been at the vanguard of census efforts in other countries. The processing of census data was successfully carried out thanks to the utilization of information and communication technologies, which enabled accurate data entry and processing.

Earlier in 2022, the ITALIKA agency received the government of Tanganyika financing toward the cost of the census exercise and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the supply of three hundred thousand (300,000) iPads to be used for the census exercise. To ensure that local suppliers are involved, the agency used national competitive tendering as specified in the Public Procurement Act No. 7 of 2011 (amended), which was open to all eligible bidders as defined in the country's public procurement regulations (as amended).

The request for bids was clearly prepared, indicating the agency's intention to invite sealed bids from qualified bidders for the supply of intended iPads. Furthermore, the request stated that interested eligible bidders could obtain additional information via the National electronic Bidding System (NeBS). This system applies to all public procuring entities that receive government funds to spend on public procurement. As a result, none of the paperwork was accepted during submission because all forms were supposed to be downloaded, completed, scanned, and uploaded to NeBS. The bid security of one hundred million Tanganyika shillings (100,000,000/-) that was to accompany the submission received additional attention.

The National electronic Bidding System (NeBS), which has been used by bidders in many different tenders, has not always been used smoothly because some of them have been complaining about the obstacles they have encountered while using NeBS. Failure to submit bids was one of the most common problems that potential suppliers of iPads ran into during the course of this particular tendering process. Due to a malfunction in the system, three potential bidders were unable to successfully upload their bids just a few days before the submission deadline that had been established. The ITALIKA agency also experienced difficulties when opening tenders online and evaluating their effectiveness. On the other hand, two of the bidders who were not registered in NeBS wanted to submit their bids in hard copy, which is something that is no longer acceptable in the tenders that are being advertised by the agency. Their bids, on the other hand, were immediately rejected by the agency as a result of their failure to submit them in accordance with the procedures that were specified in the advertisement. Following all of these setbacks on both sides, the tender needed to be re-advertised or to adjust the submission deadline in order to provide an equal playing field for all bidders, particularly those who had complained about the failure of the system.

In the meantime, with all of the re-tendering that was going on, one of the staff members from the Procurement Management Unit (PMU) began to debate what he claimed was an extremely wasteful use of the agency's funds. He continued by asserting that all of the bids that will be submitted might be excessively priced and way too expensive. In addition, he mentioned that the decision regarding the tendering process should be reconsidered, and he suggested that a more viable alternative would be to consider procuring the iPads directly from the manufacturer in order to take advantage of discounts.

This particular option, which had been suggested by a member of the PMU staff, appeared to be impossible to implement due to the impending census exercise and the impossibly short deadline. The idea was not feasible at that time for a number of reasons, including the fact that it would have led potential bidders who had already committed to taking part in the re-advertised tender to become confused.