

PROCUREMENT FOR NATIONAL COHOA PREVENTION PROJECT

National Cohoa Prevention Project (NCP) was among the four popular projects executed in the financial year 2017/2018 by the Ministry of Health and Community Engagement (MHCE) in Tanzania. NCP was executed in two phases. The first phase comprised of construction of facilities in different regions of Tanzania for enhancing implementation of the second phase of the project. This phase had to take six months from July, 2017 to December, 2017 and had to be implemented by private contractor with adequate capacity to manage the construction work. The second phase involved using the constructed facilities to impart knowledge about COHOA VIRUS-17 (COHID-17) to members of the community as well as vaccinating all those who were willing to receive the COHID-17 vaccine. This phase had to take six months from January 2018 to June 2018 subject to extension and it had to be implemented by health experts from the MHCE.

NCP was launched in July 2017 to prevent the spread of COHID-17. Therefore, in order to cope with the emergency situation created by this problem as well as to ensure expeditious procurement of items specifically required in the project, MHCE issued orders to allow emergency procurement from single-source suppliers or contractors.

In order to manage all procurement activities, avoid malpractices, enhance transparency and ensure accountability of staff involved in the implementation of the project, MHCE reviewed its internal control systems for supply function as well as strengthened its human resources capacity in the procurement and supplies audit department.

The first phase of the project under the recommended contractor (DUDU Construction Company), started as planned and was completed in December 2017 hence giving room for the commencement of the second phase of the project in January 2018. Despite the good work done by Ministry's internal auditor with respect to the implemented project, there were many allegations of irregularities directed to the Ministry in relation to procurement operations during the first phase of the project.

The allegations resulted into requests from different stakeholders of the project demanding a special audit be conducted. Due to this demand, the Audit Report on *'Procurement for NCP'* was released by the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) in September 2018. The origin of this

review was a specific directive from the Government of Tanzania to the CAG for special audits relating to procurement contracts implemented under NCPP. The CAG was required to assess the efficiency and economy of the Ministry's procurement system in an emergency situation, to identify the major cases of procurement irregularities, to identify the staff responsible for procurement irregularities and their respective departments, to report on the technical issues of procured works, to identify frauds in the inventory management system and to analyze supply risks affected the project.

The auditing was conducted in July 2018 and after the audit, a draft audit report prepared by the appointed team from the CAG office was sent to headquarters for review. It was found that the draft report was not of the required standard giving reasons that, the appointed team did not adhere to appropriate auditing procedures and therefore a decision was taken to carry out more in-depth auditing under the Principal Director in the CAG's office. After going through various files of contracts and purchases and looking at the enormity of the data involved, the Principal Director decided to create a computerized database of all the information relating to the methodology for auditing. Of course, the individual purchase cases were scrutinized as usual through the concerned files. The final output of this exercise was definitely a vastly improved account of the audit of procurement cases relating to NCPP implementation.

The draft report brought in light glaring irregularities and it recommended some accountability measures. Further, it pointed out some deficiencies and malpractices in the procurement and supplies function and recommended among others conducting stocktaking which could reveal more weaknesses relating to the stock management system at the Ministry. On the other hand, the final report by Principal Director in the CAG's office created tremendous attention in the media as well as in the parliament and therefore motivated the Chief Executive Officer of DUDU Construction to employ an external auditor who conducted auditing regarding the implemented NCPP.