

**International Contractor to provide support to Maldives Bureau of Statistics in census data analysis
(TOR ref: MDV-ToR/2023/08)**

Responses to queries (4 April 2023)

- We think that the time schedule of both the project and the tender procedure is rather ambitious.
 - We received the ToR less than two weeks before the tender submission deadline. At the moment we are all on a mission to support other census operations, and next Thursday my administration will close for a week because of Easter holidays. Would it be possible that the deadline for submitting the tender could be extended by a week, at least? This would allow us to more properly prepare the tender documentation.

Ans: Tender submission extended till 20 April.

- The ToR indicates that the project would start in April. In the coming months, we are already committed with other assignments, and we could be available to start activities no earlier than the beginning of July. This means that training could only be given in July/August. We are aware that this would impact the project's original time planning, but we are wondering if there is some flexibility in relation to the period of implementation of the requested activities.

Ans: You can indicate the available timing in your bid proposal. Selection will be based on the technical competency, availability and cost. As we have already entered April, the contract will be adjusted to start in May and ending in August with an additional month included for the assignment (Revised TOR)

- The planned duration of the project (less than three months) looks very short of realizing all the objectives. Experience of the experts in our team learns that the planning of outputs is overoptimistic, given the tasks that need to be done. The fact that all authors and data processors first need to be trained suggests that many of them will have little experience with this kind of work. This may slow down the process and mean that significant time will be needed to edit their work, perhaps rewriting important parts, finalizing the reports, and preparing a set of other products. Will a flexible approach towards the various activities and deadlines, by mutual agreement, be adopted?

Ans: Yes, a flexible approach toward the activities and deadlines will be adopted by mutual agreement at the inception phase. An additional month is currently included in the revised TOR.

- To be as specific as possible in our tender, we have some other practical questions:
 - The ToR of March 23rd mentions that 'data processing and cleaning of census data is almost ready for analysis'. Is there a more exact date that census output can be

produced? Our experience with data editing and validation tells us that this process often requires considerably more time than anticipated. Any postponement of the completion of the dataset will, of course, have implications for the start of the work on the thematic reports.

Ans: The expected date for providing the final census dataset is the first week of May. If we are unable to provide the final dataset by then, the start date of the work will be adjusted accordingly.

- The duration and type of technical support will largely depend on the quality of the census data. Has an assessment or validation of the data quality been made? What is the general assessment of the quality of the census in terms of coverage and content?

Ans: Quality and validating the census data is carried out during the cleaning process. The provisional results of the census data have been released after thorough validation of the results. Same approach will be used for sector by sector data cleaning.

- At which stage is the recruitment/assignment of chapter writers and data processors? The ToR suggests that these are MBS or line ministry staff. Will there also be other external staff, e.g. from universities or research institutes? When can they start? Will the staff be available full-time, or will they have additional daily responsibilities? What experience do the chapter writers have in writing census analyses?

Ans: By the time the contractor is onboard, MBS would have identified the chapters and trained them in basic STATA and R. Some of these chapter writers have more extensive knowledge in doing census analysis while others are new and with the aim of building their capacity in this area.

- The ToR alternatively mentions 'chapters' (implying one report covering different topics; perhaps the 'Basic report?') and 'reports' (implying stand-alone outputs; perhaps different 'basic reports' or thematic reports, hence the need for a summary report?). Would it be possible to have more clarity on this, and if it is part of the assignment to define the outputs, budget and time constraints?

Ans: Chapters were referred to above mentioned sectors (eg: chapter on education, chapter on employment, etc). For each chapter, apart from the basic report, we would like to have a summary, and to have content needed for infographics and video (The consultant is expected to come up with the content and not design the product. Designing of the report, infographic will be done by a different party).

- Among the products, 'content for island-level indicator' is mentioned. This is a bit cryptic. Does it mean census output at the island level (for 187 inhabited islands) in general or a specific indicator or something else?

Ans: This is referring to an island-level indicator sheet. MBS will propose a list of island level indicators and need contractor guidance on it.

- Data processors: what software does MBS use to produce the data?

Ans: MBS uses STATA and R

- Preferably, this should be the same as the writers know/use. Can you please confirm?

Ans: Writers will be trained in STATA. Some of the writers already have basic knowledge in STATA while others would be new. All chapter writers would be attached to a data processor, who will assist chapter writers in generating the tables they need for their analysis. Data processors are well versed in STATA.

- Mode of training

Ans: A hybrid training is proposed - a combination of on-site and remote (virtual) training

- Would the team of writers/analysts have direct access to the census database? Even remotely?

Ans: All chapter writers will have access to census database

- What is the current DSA level in the country?

Ans: DSA for the month of April is USD254

- qualification of the MBS staff. If they are experienced in STATA and R and if they also have significant previous analytical experience, the training might well be conducted within the time frame that you imagine. However, this would be exceptional. My experience with the staff of NSIs in countries like Mozambique, Vietnam, Lao PDR and some Pacific countries is that they are usually nowhere near the level of expertise required for writing census reports. To get them there would require several months of training. The biggest risk is that the MBS staff, with the short training that they received, will not be able to complete their assignments and consequently the consultant will have to "complete" them, which in many cases is writing them almost entirely. This is not an enviable position to be in.

Ans: Those MBS identified as chapter writers would be trained in STATA and committed to this work. Some of them would have previous knowledge of reporting writing while others are keen to do analysis. As the majority would be experienced staff, you will not face such issues.