



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

MINISTRY OF ENERGY

**Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation in Malawi
(ASCENT Malawi) Project**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Firm Consultancy – Consultancy Services for Consumer Awareness for ASCENT
Malawi Project (Appointment Type: National Competitive Bidding)**

June, 2026

1. Background

Energy is the driving force for any economy, as it serves as a vital catalyst for industrial growth and socio-economic development. Access to clean, reliable, affordable and sufficient energy supply is key to enhancing socio-economic wellbeing through improved quality of life, access to public services, job creation, entrepreneurship opportunities and industrialization. However, inadequate generation capacity remains one of the major factors constraining access to electricity for a large segment of the population where only 25.9% of the population has access to electricity with 11.3% connected to the national grid and 14.6% connected through off-grid solutions. For the 80% of the people living in rural areas, access to electricity is around 3.8%. Considering this, Government of Malawi (GoM) has committed to scaling up electricity access in the country by, among other key strategies, deploying off-grid solutions in rural and off-grid communities.

In line with this ambition, GoM through the Ministry of Energy (MoE) has received financial resources from the World Bank for the implementation of the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation in Malawi (ASCENT Malawi) Project. Specifically, the US\$250.8 million grant is coming from the International Development Association (IDA) and the Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP). The Project is supporting Malawi in achieving its strategic goal of reaching at least 70 percent electricity access by 2030, as outlined in the Malawi National Energy Compact and universal access to modern energy, as espoused in Malawi 2063.

Low consumer awareness and limited understanding of off-grid solar systems, clean cooking technologies, safe use practices, product quality standards, and long-term socio-economic benefits have been identified as key barriers to uptake. In addition, challenges related to theft and vandalism of electricity infrastructure, particularly grid and solar systems installed in public facilities, pose risks to sustainability and service continuity. Gender inequalities, environmental and social risks, and inadequate stakeholder engagement further constrain effective adoption and utilization of energy services.

To address these challenges, the GoM intends to implement a comprehensive, nationwide consumer awareness, behavior change, and project publicity campaign. The campaign will promote all components of the ASCENT Malawi Project, including grid electrification, off-grid solar home systems, solar systems installed in public schools and health facilities, and clean cooking solutions, while integrating messaging on infrastructure protection, gender and social inclusion, and environmental and social safeguards.

The campaign will also provide relevant information to enable consumers to adopt these products and increase their affinity for off-grid solar solutions and clean cooking technologies. It is envisaged that the campaign will reach the urban, peri-urban and rural consumers through a broad range of consumer, marketing and public awareness activities tailored to address the needs of the communities including visibility of the ASCENT Malawi Project and the Off-grid Market Development Fund (OGMDF) commonly known as the *Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF)*.

The consumer awareness campaign shall be explicitly aligned with the ASCENT Malawi Project Development Objective (PDO), Results Framework, and relevant intermediate indicators, ensuring that communication activities directly contribute to measurable project outcomes including uptake, safe use, sustainability of energy services, and reduced infrastructure vandalism.

The MoE intends to apply part of the proceeds of this financing towards the procurement of consultancy services for this Awareness and Marketing Campaign.

2. Purpose of the Assignment

The purpose of the assignment is to appoint a firm to design and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based consumer awareness, behavior change, and project publicity campaign that ensures nationwide visibility of the ASCENT Malawi Project and all its components. The campaign shall promote informed adoption, safe use, and sustainable management of off-grid solar systems, grid electricity, solar systems in public institutions, and clean cooking solutions, while addressing cross-cutting issues of theft and vandalism, gender equality and social inclusion, and environmental and social safeguards.

The specific objectives are:

- i. To develop a broad communication and consumer marketing campaign aimed at improving awareness of, and generating demand for off-grid solar and clean cooking solutions;
- ii. To develop a set of consumer awareness materials supporting the campaign;
- iii. To conduct the awareness campaigns including safety and risks associated with illegal connections;
- iv. To develop and implement a nationwide communication and consumer awareness campaign covering all ASCENT Malawi Project components;
- v. To increase awareness, and demand for off-grid solar and clean cooking products; and sustainable use of solar systems installed in public schools and health facilities;
- vi. To promote behaviour, change related to safe, legal, and efficient use of electricity and clean cooking technologies;
- vii. To raise awareness on prevention of theft and vandalism of energy infrastructure, emphasizing community ownership, protection, and reporting mechanisms;
- viii. To develop and apply a clear behaviour change theory or framework that defines baseline behaviours, desired behaviours, barriers, incentives, and pathways to change across different consumer segments;
- ix. To increase consumer understanding of product quality standards, warranties, after-sales service, consumer rights, financing terms, and grievance redress mechanisms related to off-grid solar, grid electricity, and clean cooking solutions;
- x. To integrate gender equality, social inclusion, and environmental and social safeguards (E&S) messaging in all campaign materials and activities; and
- xi. To enhance visibility of the ASCENT Malawi Project, NNNF, and Government support to the energy sector at national and community levels.

3. Scope of the Assignment

The Consulting Firm shall be responsible for the development, launch, and implementation of an integrated Consumer Awareness, Behaviour Change, and Project Publicity Campaign, including but not limited to the following:

3.1. Consumer Awareness and Communications Strategy

- a) Develop an integrated communication strategy defining objectives, key messages, value propositions, target audiences, communication channels, and a metrics system with KPIs. A reputation risk management plan should be developed as part of the overall strategy. Segment target audiences (households, students, teachers, health workers, community leaders, women, youth, persons with disabilities, private sector actors, and local authorities) and tailor messages accordingly.
- b) Develop a Behaviour Change Framework or Theory of Change that links communication interventions to specific, measurable behavioural outcomes, including legal connections, safe usage practices, timely repayment for financed products, and community protection of energy assets. Identify barriers to adoption and propose targeted behavioural interventions.
- c) Explicitly include messaging on:
 - Clean cooking solutions and their health, gender, environmental, and economic benefits;
 - Solar energy systems installed in public schools and health facilities, including operation, maintenance, and protection;
 - Prevention of theft and vandalism of energy infrastructure;
 - Gender equality, social inclusion, and protection of vulnerable groups; Environmental and social safeguards, including community health and safety, Gender Based Violence, prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and, Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM)
 - consumer protection and financial literacy, covering product quality assurance, certification, warranties, after-sales service, PAYGo and loan repayment obligations, and protection against counterfeit or substandard products.

3.2. Media and Publicity Strategy

- a) Develop a media and publicity strategy ensuring visibility of all ASCENT components at national, district, and community levels.
- b) Prepare a mix of radio, television, print, digital, social media, community outreach, and institutional platforms.
- c) Develop branding for the campaign aligned with ASCENT Malawi Project and NNNF identity.
- d) Develop a media outreach monitoring plan as well as an overall impact measurement

3.3. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

ASCENT Malawi Project maintains a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) which aims to foster coordinated and ongoing engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including affected individuals and interested parties, throughout the project cycle. The purpose of the SEP is to provide a strategy for involving stakeholders in the ASCENT-

Malawi, ensuring they understand the project's objectives and have avenues to provide feedback, voice concerns, and contribute to related activities. The SEP outlines the anticipated stakeholders, their information needs, and the timing and methods for their engagement throughout the project's lifecycle. The key objectives of this stakeholder engagement plan are as follows:

- a) Identify and implement effective collaboration strategies among project stakeholders.
- b) Enhance acceptance and participation in project interventions among target beneficiaries.
- c) Recognize potential barriers to the accelerated implementation of the project and collaboratively address them

As part of the consumer awareness and communication strategy, the Consultant will need to align the campaign with the SEP and identify how to best engage different stakeholder groups, developing appropriate insights and messaging to ensure their buy-in. The consultant will coordinate with the PIU and share information accordingly.

3.4. Implementation Plan and Timeframe

The total contract is for a period of thirty-six (36) months from the signing of the agreement broken down into the following;

- a. Within one (1) month of the start of the assignment, develop an inception report outlining all the key activities with their timelines and expected outcomes of the consultancy.
- b. Develop the following plans and strategies within the first three (3) months:
 - **Integrated communication strategy**

This shall define objectives, key messages, value propositions, target audiences, desired behavioural changes, and communication channels;
 - **Behaviour Change Framework or Theory of Change**

This shall link communication interventions to specific, measurable behavioural outcomes; a media/publicity roll out plan for the awareness campaign with associated timeline for all activities.
- c. Following the review and approval of the planning and strategy documents, develop a budget for all proposed activities. This shall be due within the first four (4) months of the assignment.
- d. Conduct a well-planned and controlled pilot programme for each of the main communication channels/means, after which necessary refinements may be made to the strategy, content and platforms before mass roll out. This shall be due within the first six (6) months of the assignment.
- e. Following review of the pilot programme, begin implementation of the Consumer Awareness and Communications Strategy and Media and Publicity Strategy within seven (7) months of the start of the assignment.

- f. Implement a transparent media and communications tracking system to ensure accountability on media expenditures and impact and outcomes of all communication activities. This shall be conducted between months seven (7) and thirty-six (36) with monitoring, impact and effectiveness reports produced every six (6) months to inform any changes in the plan.
- g. Develop a monitoring tool that provides feedback on the effectiveness/impact of the advert to the targeted audience, efficiently and in a timely manner. This shall be due within the first six (6) months of the assignment with monthly updates provided to the DoEA.

4. Deliverables

The assignment deliverables shall comprise the following:

- a. Inception report – outlining in detail the activities to be undertaken by the consultant including methodology, implementation plan and timelines. It should also include an overview of the narrative summarizing the consultant’s understanding of the scope and the intended goals of the consumer awareness campaign and an outline of the final report;
- b. A comprehensive consumer awareness strategy clearly defining: targets audiences, what communication methods will be used and specification such as channels, frequency, languages, etc.
- c. Communication Risk and Mitigation Matrix: A concise matrix identifying key communication risks that may affect campaign as misinformation, resistance to behaviour change, cultural sensitivities, misunderstanding of financing terms e.t.c, their likelihood, impact, and corresponding mitigation measures.
- d. An implementation plan/media roll out plan for the awareness campaign with associated timeline for all activities. Design layout (for printing/production) of project folder, brochure, banner, billboard, campaign, t-shirt, poster etc.
- e. A budget forecast of the costs associated with the suggested activities.
- f. A monitoring tool to be operated by PIU that provides feedback on the effectiveness and impact of the advert to the targeted audience.
- g. Monthly progress reports highlighting both challenges and achievements;
- h. Quarterly progress on activities undertaken and solutions to challenges;
- i. Final report - Final Report on Consultancy, which should show the methodology used, activities undertaken, successes, challenges, results (planned and unplanned), lessons identified and recommendations on how to address those lessons.

5. Reporting and Management of the Assignment

The Consultant will be contracted by the MoE. Legal or administrative issues with respect to the contract or payment shall be handled by the MoE.

Day-to-day supervision and the approval of all the outputs shall be the responsibility of the ASCENT Malawi PIU and the Consultant will report directly to the Project Manager.

6. Firm Qualifications and Experience

The selected firm will be a professional marketing communications firm, or a joint venture of firms, with a track record of relevant work in Malawi. The selected consulting firm's team will need to demonstrate its experience both in communications and marketing campaign development particularly in the Malawi/Southern Africa market context and have good knowledge & experience in household electrification and clean cooking or related consumer campaigns.

The firm or consortium will need to demonstrate:

- a. Extensive experience in consumer awareness and behaviour change campaigns related to electricity access, grid, off-grid solar systems and clean cooking solutions.
- b. Prior experience with World Bank–financed or development partner–funded projects is desirable including at least one assignment targeting rural populations in Malawi or Sub- Saharan Africa.
- c. Experience in developing urban and rural demand for product/behaviour
- d. Experience in design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation on reporting on product awareness campaign.
- e. Experience in conducting awareness and product education campaigns on households and enterprises
- f. Strong understanding of local enabling environment and public sector context in Malawi
- g. Demonstrated experience designing campaigns that address theft and vandalism of public infrastructure through community engagement and ownership models.
- h. Strong experience integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- i. Demonstrated application of environmental and social safeguards, including community health and safety, stakeholder engagement, and grievance redress mechanisms.
- j. Proven capacity for monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) of communication and behaviour change interventions.
- k. Availability of qualified local staff fluent in English and relevant local languages.

7. Team's Experience, Composition and Qualifications

The consulting firm should comprise qualified personnel with the appropriate team composition, qualifications, and experience required for the key expert positions. The firm must provide well-qualified and experienced experts suitable for completing the assignment. Additionally, the Consultant should possess all necessary resources to deliver services of this nature, including relevant software, tools, and equipment needed to execute the task effectively. The specific experience of the firms/ JVs (separate from key staff) should be provided. The key experts to be provided by the Consultant shall include the following:

a) Team Leader

The team leader will be the primary person responsible for the technical work and will manage the assignment design and implementation process. He/she should hold a master's degree in communications/marketing, development communications, Public Relations, Journalism and with minimum of 5 years' experience in related community-based assignments.

b) Community-Based Consumer Education Specialist

The Community-Based Consumer Education Specialist should hold a Master's Degree in Communication, Education and with minimum of 5 years' experience in related community-based assignments

c) Technical Staff - Communications

The technical staff should hold a Bachelor's Degree in Communication, Creative Designs, Gender and Diversity, Education, Development Communications, Public Relations, Journalism and with minimum of 5 years' experience in related community-based assignments.

d) Technical Staff – Renewable Energy (Solar PV) and Clean Cooking Specialist

The technical staff should hold at least Bachelor's Degree in Renewable Energy or related fields and with a minimum of 5years experience in marketing Solar PV and clean cooking products in Urban and Rural Areas.

e) Social Safeguard

Social Safeguards specialist should have Bachelor's Degree in Sociology with minimum of 5 years' experience in related community-based assignments.

f) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) specialist

Should have a Bachelor's Degree in Economics, Social Science or related discipline and a minimum of 5 years of demonstrated experience in evaluating communication and behaviour change interventions in the energy or infrastructure sector

8. Payment Schedule

	Payment Tranche	Timeli ne	Milestone / Trigger	Key Deliverables	Payme nt (%)	Cumulati ve (%)
1	Inception Phase	Months 1–3	Approval of inception and initial planning documents	Inception Report • Draft implementation/media roll-out plan with timelines	10%	10%
2	Strategy & Budget Development	By end of Month 4	Approval of strategy and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive consumer awareness strategy - Budget forecast for proposed activities 	15%	25%
3	Pilot & Systems Setup	By end of Month 6	Approval of pilot programme and monitoring systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot programme for communication channels - Monitoring/feedback tool for PIU use 	20%	40%
4	Consumer Awareness, Communication, and Media Plan Implementation (Rolling Payments)	Months 7–36	Satisfactory implementation and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of media plan - Monthly progress reports - Quarterly progress summaries - Semi-annual monitoring impact & effectiveness reports 	40% (paid semi-annually – based on approved months)	85%
5	Final Completion	End of Month 36	Approval of final report	Final Consultancy Report including results, lessons learned and recommendations	15%	100%

9. Working Language

The working language for this assignment will be English, but the verification team should include members who are able to communicate in local languages.

10. Selection Method

The attention of consultants is drawn to section III, para 3.14, 3.16 & 3.17 of the World Bank's *Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers: Procurement in Investment Projects Financing Goods, Works, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services, "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" July 2016, revised November 2017, August 2018, September 2023 and February 2025* ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

Consultants may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub consultancy to enhance their qualifications. Firms may partner either during the expression of interest or thereafter but the conditions applicable to the firm whose application is received will be applicable to the partnering firm. Firms are particularly encouraged to partner with local experts.

This is a performance-based contract and a Consultant will be selected in accordance with the Quality Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method, following shortlisting, as set out in the above procurement Regulations.

11. Eligibility

A firm declared ineligible by the World Bank group in accordance with the Bank Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants shall be ineligible for short listing.

12. Obligations of the Client

The Client will:

- a) Provide the necessary reference documents, supporting letters to facilitate the consultant's travel, monitor the work, and release contractual payments in a timely manner.
- b) Provide relevant information related to the consultancy, such as Project Appraisal Document, Project Implementation Manual, Project Operations Manual, Financing Agreement, reports, evaluations and documents relevant to the assignment and the Stakeholders Engagement Plan.

13. Duration of the Assignment

The duration of the assignment shall be thirty-six (36) months from the contract commencement date. The firm is expected to start the assignment by 1st August 2026.