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**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CONSULTANCY TO ASSESS THE CIVIC SPACE IN UGANDA- JUNE 2023-AUGUST 2024**

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**ABOUT THE NATIONAL COALITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is a registered organization of various organizations and individual Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) that was formed in 2013. It seeks to strengthen the work of HRDs throughout the country through synergy and collaboration at national and international level to enhance the protection mechanisms for HRDs and their capacity to effectively defend human rights. NCHRD-U focuses its work in all regions in Uganda.

NCHRD-U’s purpose is to protect and promote the work of HRDs in safe and secure environment through linkages with national, regional and international entities. Individuals and organizations working to promote the protection of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Uganda. Further information about the Organization and what it does, can be found on our website: [www.hrdcoalition.ug](http://www.hrdcoalition.ug)

**Introduction**

Civil society space in Uganda is rapidly shrinking. Domestic and international rights organizations report that the Government of Uganda has grown increasingly less tolerant of criticism over the past decade. Freedom of expression across the country is in significant jeopardy, retrogressive laws have been enacted and state institutions have adopted a more ruthless response to civic activists. NGOs that engage in monitoring the conduct of the state and advocate for human rights, women’s rights, in anti-corruption and accountability, land issues and democratic governance have experienced growing restrictions on the space available for them to carry out their activities. The Black Monday movement, for example - a civil society-led campaign in 2012 to protest the theft of public funds by public officials and politicians – was quickly closed down and senior figures arrested.

Independent civil society organizations are being openly threatened and placed under excessive scrutiny by senior government officials. For example, on 1 June, 2019 Uganda’s Minister for Internal Affairs called for increased regulation and supervision of NGOs in response to a civil society report detailing cases of land grabbing in Uganda. He accused the authors of the report – Uganda Land Alliance and Oxfam – of “peddling lies” and urged NGOs to share their reports with the government before releasing them to the public.

**Introduction to consultancy assignment**

A vibrant, legitimate, and well-informed civil society organizations (CSOs) sector is essential for a healthy democratic system and government. Through the freedom to associate, assemble, and express themselves, citizens can shape the political and social structures that guide their lives. Consequently, it is in the interest of CSO players particularly those who champion transparency, accountability, and civic participation to encourage open civic space where their grantees operate.

Initiatives that support CSOs in Uganda face increasing risks to their integrity and impact. The 21st century saw governments around the world introduce a range of measures restricting the ability of CSOs to operate freely. The trend has encompassed an array of repressive laws, regulations, and practices. These include the imposition of excessive bureaucratic procedures, limitations on foreign funding for CSOs, constraints on freedom of assembly and expression, surveillance, explicit restrictions on nongovernmental organizations’ engagement of certain issues, and barriers to where they can operate. Therefore, CSOs must update their knowledge and approaches to help overcome such challenges.

Addressing the shrinking civic space trend demands a comprehensive and coordinated approach that emphasizes trust, effectiveness, and local context. While there are active and robust discussions on civic space challenges, their scope has often been diluted by both the urgency and the nuance needed to determine how to best support civil society actors in continuing their work. Moreover, despite a general understanding of the shrinking civic space problem, there is limited insight into how individual organizations experience these challenges across diverse geographic and political settings, as well as the practical strategies that funders and grantees employ to counteract this harmful trend.

Following the civic space analysis conducted in 2021, the sub-group intends to conduct an analysis of the prevailing civic space contextual challenges in Uganda. The key product will be a civic space index, which will be benchmarked on the six dimensions including: Freedom of Information and Expression, Rights of Assembly and Association, Citizen Participation, Non-Discrimination and Inclusion, and Human Rights / Rule of Law.

The main objective of this consultancy is to generate an evidence based and context-specific understanding of the current state of civic space in Uganda which will be measured across key dimensions including freedom of expression, assembly, association, citizen participation, inclusion, and rule of law in order to inform CSOs, funders, and policymakers on strategies that protect, expand, and sustain an enabling environment for civil society action. The analysis will further help in identifying challenges and opportunities for state and non-state actors, develop a civic space index report and an advocacy strategy.

Specific activities the consultant will perform:

1. Conduct an assessment: The consultant will conduct an assessment of key issues affecting civic space in five (05) regions with in the last one year. The Consultant will work with the participants in order to identify and agree on key issues/themes that should be included in the assessment report.
2. Conduct a trendy analysis bench marked on last year’s civic space analysis
3. Conduct an assessment of the report at the Launch: The Consultant will design a one-day long assessment at the Launch of the report in light of study findings.
4. Reporting: The consultant will provide details report of the Workshop. The report should contain details of the discussion, activities/mechanisms agreed by participants of each region, challenges, and recommendations.
5. Final civic space index report and a policy brief following the recommendations from the assessment

**Duration and Deliverables of the Consultancy**

The key product will be a civic space index and advocacy strategy, which will be benchmarked on the six dimensions including: Freedom of Information and Expression, Rights of Assembly and Association, Citizen Participation, Non-Discrimination and Inclusion, and Human Rights / Rule of Law. The total duration of this consultancy is one month. Details are described in the table below:

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| **Activity** | **Deliverable** | **Duration** | **Remarks** |
| Conduct a rapid study of key issues affecting civic space in 8 regions within the last one year. | Civic space index report | 14 days | The Consultant will work both physical & online with participant in advance to complete this activity. Partners will share contact information of the participants with the consultant as soon as the contract is signed. |
| Deliver an assessment at the report Launch | 1day validation workshop | 1 day | The consultant will conduct an assessment at the Launch of the report. |

**Qualification and Skills Required:**

* The applicant should have Master degree from a recognized university in the field of development studies, management, social science or other relevant fields.
* Minimum of seven years’ relevant experience. Previous experience working with/on civil society, research on Freedom of Information and Expression, Rights of Assembly and Association, Citizen Participation, Non-Discrimination and Inclusion, and Human Rights / Rule of Law.
* Strong diplomatic skills a high level of cultural sensitivity and familiarity with an international and/or regional work environment.
* An ability to work in and through networks and alliances
* An ability to work with diverse actors
* Fluency in English (written and verbal)

**Consultation Fee:**

The consultant cannot sub contract this assignment to any other person or organization. The consultant is required to deliver quality services as per the plan and in close coordination with relevant stakeholders. Please mention your proposed daily consultancy fee for this 20-day assignment in the cover letter, include a financial and technical proposal.

**Application Process:**

The consultant (s) should send the following information to [info@hrdcoalition.ug](mailto:info@hrdcoalition.ug) by 4pm on the 14th October 2025 or hand delivered to National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda Plot 148, SEMAWATTA ROAD, NTINDA, KAMPALA with Reference; Consultancy NO. EU/2025. (Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted)

• A brief proposal of no more than 2 page indicating how they will approach the task as outlined and including 2 references - at least 1 of which needs to be an organisation that work has been done for in the last 12 months.

• At least 1 example of work completed in the last 12 months.

• A budget for the consultancy which outlines an overall cost and a daily cost.

• A brief profile/CV of the consultant(s) that will be responsible.

N.B. The winning proposal will be one that indicates an appropriate implementation model that is considerate of the current health situation in Uganda.