



## Remarks from Awel Uwhanganye, Head, GCIC

OpenGov Workshop, 26 Sept. 2019

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of GCIC, the Ministry of ICT and its organizing committee, I would like to express our warm welcome to all the Government Communicators, Strategic Partners and other stakeholders present.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation towards your participation in our Inaugural Open Government Workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to review the best practices for Open Government in Uganda. The facilitators will focus on how to harness "Open Government" for delivering equitable development outcomes.

Most critically we shall be assessing the opportunities we can exploit to bridge the gap between Ugandan Citizens and Government. During today's sessions, we will identify new strategies to improve access to public information, as a key cornerstone for building an open and transparent Government.

Governments around the world are recognizing the need to introduce open gov't reforms to better deliver on the demands and aspirations of their citizens. This is not, however, something that can be achieved by gov't reformers alone.

At the Government Citizen's Interaction Centre (GCIC), we believe that there are significant opportunities which can improve the efficiency of service delivery through leveraging the power of digital media for open government.

From paving roads, accessing health care, education services to electing politicians, digital media is reshaping what citizens know, who they communicate with, and what they need to know to get things done.

GCIC is therefore designed to function and operate as an open government platform where citizens can share their views about what they want and need, what they like and dislike, and their overall expectations from Government.

The Government Citizen Interaction Centre (GCIC) operates under the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance as a key contact centre between Government and citizens to enhance the monitoring of service delivery. We provide a channel for feedback and suggestions from citizens in a bid to promote open governance.

At the moment, the Government of Uganda is missing out most on crucial digital media components. As a result, opportunities to engage with citizens have been forfeited, thus widening the gap to build sustainable partnerships which foster national development.

GCIC uses interactive digital tools, approaches and strategies to better connect citizens and stakeholders to the government of Uganda. Currently we're utilizing the unique opportunity of increased usage of smartphones in Uganda. This has simplified our messaging to citizens, subsequently improving access to critical services.

Our strategic focus on Open government is about increasing access to information and data. At GCIC we seek to leverage existing and meaningful opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between government and the public.

More interestingly, we now have a fully operational call centre service and the 900-toll free number at GCIC. There's a dedicated call centre team which is always on standby to provide timely feedback to queries on service delivery to citizens.

The data generated through GCIC's call centre is analyzed to inform policy decisions, guide in the formulation of policy interventions and in the creation of targeted messages to citizens.

This is because we recognize that Central and Local Governments are faced with a challenge of lack of access to information and most importantly lack an aspect of Citizen's participation.

Officials most often withhold public information from citizens which creates public distrust. On the other hand, Government officials lack reliable data to facilitate evidence-based policymaking.

They need open data which is reliable, accessible and consistent so it can be placed in the right hands and in the right form to create policy impact.

Notably, the Government has further deployed other open government initiatives such as the Open Budget Week which is championed by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED).

Here, Citizens are invited to attend countrywide exhibitions organized by MoFPED to showcase the successes of various government agencies, the services provided. Citizens are also consulted on the Budget framework paper where their views are taken into consideration, making them a huge component of the National Budget planning process.

So far, the Open Budget Week has been well received by the public which has for long felt marginalized in decision making processes. Open Government therefore recognizes the value of feedback and the contribution that citizens make towards National Development.

On a high note, I end my remarks with an open call to action to all the stakeholders gathered here to become advocates of promoting open governance. I believe forming a coalition between the Government of Uganda & its citizens will foster collaboration, transparency & accountability in service delivery.

Thank you for your attention!