Terms of Reference: Evaluation of the MECS Trust Fund in Uganda

Background

The Government of Uganda (GoU), through the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD), in partnership with Loughborough University under the Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) Programme, is implementing the eCooking Scale-up and Support Programme to accelerate the transition to clean, modern cooking solutions in Uganda. The programme seeks to increase the adoption of electric cooking (eCooking) technologies as a key pathway towards achieving Uganda's clean cooking, energy access and climate objectives, while reducing reliance on traditional biomass fuels.

The uptake of eCooking in Uganda has grown significantly in recent years, driven by improvements in electricity access, consumer awareness, and the availability of energy-efficient appliances such as electric pressure cookers, induction cookers and other modern electric cooking technologies. Sustaining this growth requires a robust and competitive private sector supply chain capable of importing, assembling, distributing and providing after-sales support for high-quality appliances that meet national technical, safety and energy efficiency standards. Equally important is access to affordable finance for both suppliers and consumers to overcome market barriers and enable businesses to scale their operations.

To address these challenges, the MECS Programme, in collaboration with MEMD, established the MECS Trust Fund, a market development financing mechanism designed to support the importation and market expansion of approved eCooking appliances in Uganda. The Fund provides short-term concessional working capital loans to eligible private sector companies engaged in the importation, distribution, assembly and sale of approved eCooking appliances. The financing is intended to address liquidity constraints, reduce the cost of capital, strengthen local supply chains and increase the availability and affordability of high-quality eCooking technologies across the country.

The MECS Trust Fund operates under the oversight of MEMD and the MECS Programme, with support from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), ensuring transparency, accountability and achievement of its intended market development outcomes.

As the Trust Fund completes its first year of implementation, MEMD and the MECS Programme seek to commission an independent evaluation specialist to assess the Fund's performance, effectiveness and efficiency. The evaluation will examine the extent to which the Trust Fund has achieved its objectives of improving access to concessional finance, strengthening the eCooking supply chain, increasing the availability of quality-assured appliances, and contributing to the growth of Uganda's emerging eCooking market. The findings will provide evidence to inform future improvements in the design, implementation and potential scale-up of the Trust Fund and similar market-based financing mechanisms.

Scope of Work

There are 2 strands to this evaluation.

1. The first will assess the relevance of the intervention, progress against objectives, strengths and weaknesses in the approach, areas for modification and scope for scaling up.

2. The second will assess the value for money (VfM - economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness) of the intervention (as defined by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, UK).

The findings will provide valuable learning to the Clean Cooking Unit (CCU) in MEMD and support in evidence-based decision-making for future programming.

Specific Interventions:

The Consultant shall undertake an independent evaluation of the MECS Trust Fund to assess its performance during its first year of implementation and generate evidence and recommendations to improve the design, implementation and future scaling of the Fund. The evaluation shall be guided by internationally recognized evaluation principles and shall assess the Trust Fund against the following evaluation criteria:

1. **Relevance:** Assess the extent to which the design and objectives of the Trust Fund remain relevant to the needs of Uganda's eCooking market and the broader clean cooking agenda.

The evaluation shall examine:

a) Whether the Fund addresses the financing constraints facing eCooking companies.
b) Alignment with Uganda's National Integrated Clean Cooking Strategy, Energy Transition Plan and national energy access objectives.
c) Relevance of the Fund's eligibility criteria, loan products and financing terms.
d) Relevance of supported technologies to market demand.
e) Responsiveness of the Fund to private sector needs.

2. **Coherence:** Assess how well the Trust Fund complements existing policies, programmes and financing **initiatives**.

The evaluation shall examine:

a) Coordination between MEMD, MECS and Equity Bank.
b) Synergies with programmes such as Electricity Access Scale Up Program, Private Sector Foundation of Uganda programs and the Uganda Biogas and Electric Cooking Program (UBEP)
c) Complementarity with other clean cooking financing mechanisms.
d) Alignment with Government policies and donor-supported initiatives.
e) Institutional coordination among key stakeholders.

3. **Effectiveness:** Assess the extent to which the Trust Fund has achieved its intended objectives.

The evaluation shall assess:

a) Number of companies supported.
b) Value of loans approved and disbursed.
c) Increase in appliance imports.
d) Availability of approved eCooking appliances.
e) Expansion of distribution networks.
f) Growth in appliance sales.
g) Compliance with product quality standards.
h) Improvement in private sector capacity.

4. **Efficiency:** Assess how efficiently financial and institutional resources have been utilized.

The evaluation shall review:

a) Loan processing timelines.
b) Efficiency of the EOI and appraisal process.
c) Administrative costs.
d) Time taken from application to disbursement.
e) Efficiency of monitoring and reporting systems.
f) Performance of the Fund Administrator.
g) Cost-effectiveness of Fund operations.

5. **Adaptive Management:** Assess whether the Trust Fund has effectively used evidence and learning to improve implementation.

The Consultant shall examine:

a) Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems.
b) Availability and quality of performance data.
c) Use of monitoring information for decision-making.
d) Risk management practices.
e) Mechanisms for stakeholder feedback.
f) Responsiveness to implementation challenges.

6. **Scalability:** Assess the potential for expanding or replicating the Trust Fund.

The evaluation shall examine:

a) Financial sustainability of the model.
b) Potential for attracting additional capitalization.
c) Opportunities for commercial banks to replicate the model.
d) Suitability of the financing mechanism for other clean cooking technologies.
e) Policy and institutional requirements for scaling nationally.

7. **Sustainability:** Assess the likelihood that the benefits of the Trust Fund will continue beyond the initial funding period.

The evaluation shall assess:

a) Sustainability of participating businesses.
b) Loan repayment performance.
c) Long-term viability of the financing model.
d) Sustainability of supply chains.
e) Consumer confidence in supported technologies.
f) Institutional arrangements for continuation of the Fund.

8. **Cross-cutting Assessment:** Across all evaluation criteria, the Consultant shall additionally assess:

a) Governance and accountability arrangements.
b) Transparency and integrity of Fund operations.
c) Compliance with technical, safety and energy efficiency standards.
d) Effectiveness of after-sales service requirements.

e) Performance of the Expression of Interest process.
f) Performance of the Monitoring, Reporting and Verification framework.
g) Key implementation risks, lessons learned and good practices.

Key Evaluation Questions

Consistent with good evaluation practice, the Consultant shall develop an evaluation matrix during the inception phase that expands these criteria into specific evaluation questions, indicators, data sources and methods. Indicative high-level evaluation questions include:

1. Is the MECS Trust Fund relevant to the financing needs of Uganda's eCooking sector?
2. How effectively has the Trust Fund achieved its intended objectives?
3. Has the Fund been implemented efficiently by MEMD and Equity Bank?
4. What measurable changes has the Fund contributed to within Uganda's eCooking market?
5. Have the benefits of the Fund been equitably distributed among eligible market actors?
6. How effective are the Fund's governance, monitoring and adaptive management systems?
7. What is the potential for scaling and sustaining the Trust Fund beyond its pilot phase?
8. What lessons should inform the design of future clean cooking financing mechanisms?

Consultant qualifications and experience

Academic qualifications:

1. A minimum of a Master's degree in Economics, Finance, Business Administration, Monitoring and Evaluation, Development Studies, Energy, Public Policy or another relevant discipline.
2. Professional training in evaluation methodologies.

Professional Experience:

- At least 5 years of relevant professional experience in programme or project evaluation, monitoring and evaluation, development finance or related fields.
- Demonstrated experience conducting at least one (1) independent evaluation of development programmes, financing facilities, private sector development initiatives or donor-funded projects.
- Experience evaluating programmes financed by development partners, international financial institutions or government agencies.
- Experience in designing and implementing mixed-method evaluations, including document review, stakeholder interviews, surveys and data analysis.

Deliverables, Budget & Duration

The research is expected to commence no later than **1st October 2026.** All deliverables must be completed and delivered by **31st January 2027,** these dates are non-negotiable. The consultant should demonstrate in their response to these ToRs how the work can be completed within the time available.

It is expected that there will be up to 20 days of effort spread between Nov 1st and January 31st. The consultant should stipulate in the Gantt chart how these days are expected to be broken down into different activities.

The total budget is a maximum of **£6,000. This is the total contract value and must include any locally payable, WHT, VAT, taxes, and charges.** Budgets presented excluding these taxes will be automatically rejected. Payment is contingent on successful completion of all deliverables.

Responding to these ToRs

Each submission will be evaluated based on the following combination of price and quality;

Quality	**Score**
Appreciation and understanding of the task	0%
Quality of the evaluation framework – this section should outline in detail the proposed evaluation framework. At a minimum is should include the key evaluation questions and evaluation method needed to evaluate each of the points set out in the scope of work.	30%
Implementation of the evaluation framework – this section should explain in detail, how the evaluation will be conducted with which individuals (roles rather than names are acceptable) and how the analysis of the data will be completed.	20%
Skills, expertise and experience of consultant including evidence of similar work completed. A minimum of 2 references must be provided.	20%
Proposed management of the activities including Gantt chart	10%
Price and costs – this must include all costs including any locally payable, WHT, VAT, taxes, and charges. Budgets presented excluding these taxes will be automatically rejected.	20%
Total	**100%**

The University will accept the quotation which is the best value for money i.e. a balance between cost and quality. Shortlisted organisations may be invited to an interview (online) to finalise selection.

Important information

- This opportunity is only open to individuals, not consortiums or partnerships.
- Any person already connected to the eCooking Scale up and Support Programme, in any capacity (either as an awardee or working for an organisation that has benefited from the programme) is not eligible to apply.
- Responses should be a maximum of 6 pages (plus 1 CV of 2 pages).
- Responses should be submitted in Word (do not submit Powerpoint/Prezi or PDF)

Please send all responses to mecs@lboro.ac.uk with the subject '**UGANDA TRUST FUND EVALUATION.**
All proposals must be received by **18th August 2026 at 23:55 (British Summer Time).**
The time will be determined using the time of arrival in the MECS inbox. Any offers received after 23:55 will be rejected.

Contract Management

This contract will be managed by Dr Will Clements. All deliverables should be emailed to them on or before the date required. Loughborough University reserves the right to request the consultant to make revisions to the deliverables if they do not meet the required quality. The consultant will be required to make these revisions at no additional cost to Loughborough University.

Appointments to discuss the overall progress against the contract will be agreed at mutually convenient times to the consultant and the project manager.

Ethical considerations

All research must be in line with the Code of Practice for research, Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct (UK Research Integrity Office, 2009).

The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) is an independent charity, offering support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in academic, scientific and medical research. Its confidential advice service is available to free of charge to individuals (members of the public, research participants, patients, researchers and students) and subscribing organisations. Their advice service can be accessed here.

At a minimum, participants must not be subjected to physical, social, legal or psychological harm. Due consideration and ethical steps must be taken into safeguarding all participants, especially the vulnerable. A detailed Participation Information Sheet explaining the full scope of the study, what confidentiality entails, and that no participants will be forced into participating, must be provided at recruitment. Participants are to be made aware that participation is fully voluntary and there are no repercussions if they choose to no longer participate in the study at any point in time. Participants should, ideally, sign a consent form which includes consent for the use of photographs and videos.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. With regards to confidentiality and privacy of participation, participants must be informed that their anonymity will be maintained in any outputs and that all identifiable markers will be removed from any data sets that are published.

The consultant will be responsible for securing any research or ethical permissions needed from local authorities in each of the field work locations. There may be additional ethical, or research clearance needed for this kind of user centric design research in the chosen country.