Objectives of the Assessment

- To assess the level of completion and quality of the outputs of the **Digital Forms Solutions.**

- To assess the achievement of intermediate outcomes such as readiness to accept and adopt the solution, including attitudes and behavioral changes of the intended users of the solution.

- To identify challenges faced by the ICTA teams during implementation and identify lessons learned, reasons for unexpected delays, & gaps,- what worked and what didn't work and why ?

Evaluation Methods

Both primary and Secondary Data required for the evaluation were gathered through the following methods;

1. Document review
2. Key Informant Interviews
3. Focus Group Discussions
4. Systematic Observations

Instruments used

- Semi structured questionnaire
- FGD guideline
- Observation Schedules

Figure 4: Evaluation Data Collection Methods
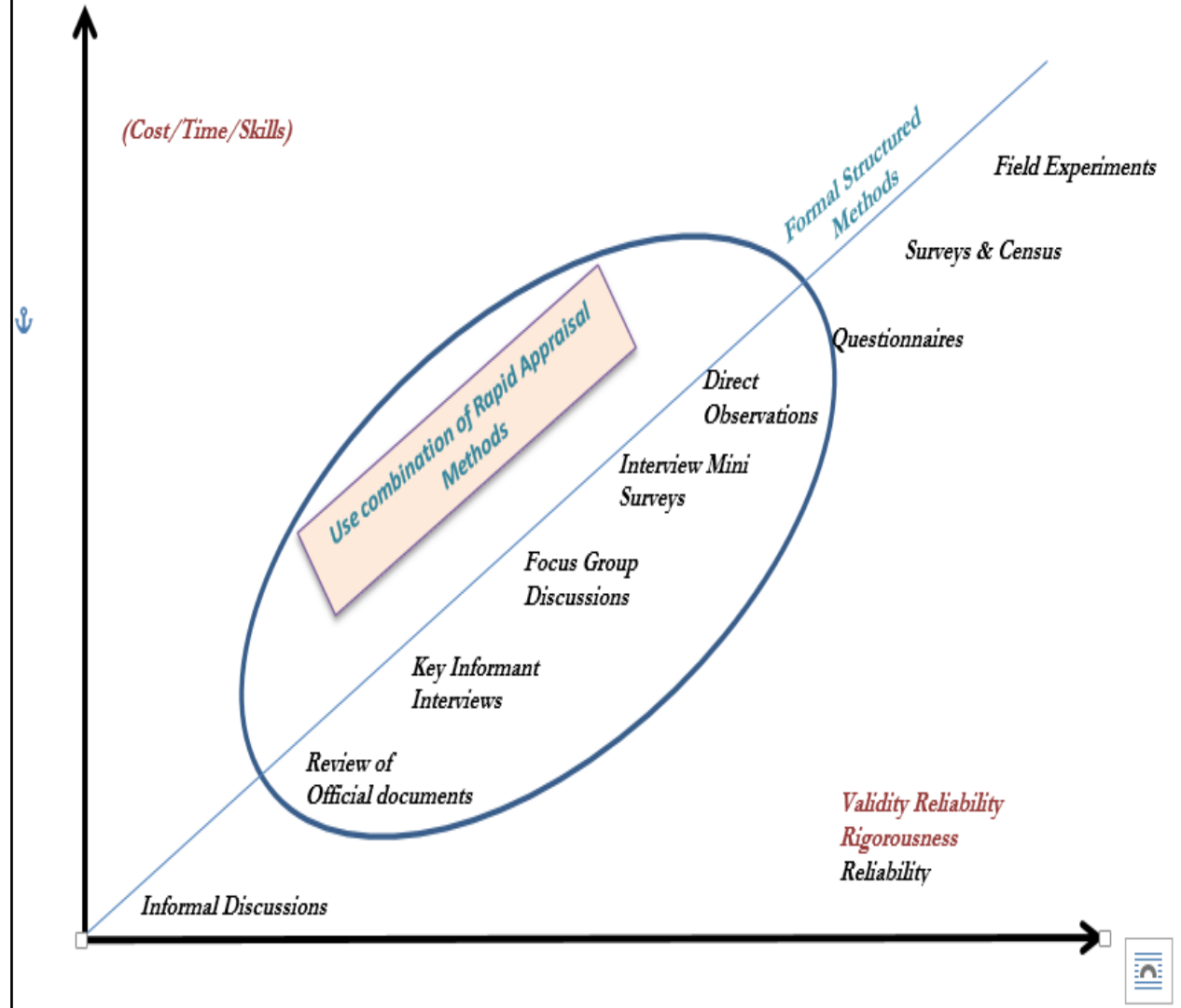
CERC background

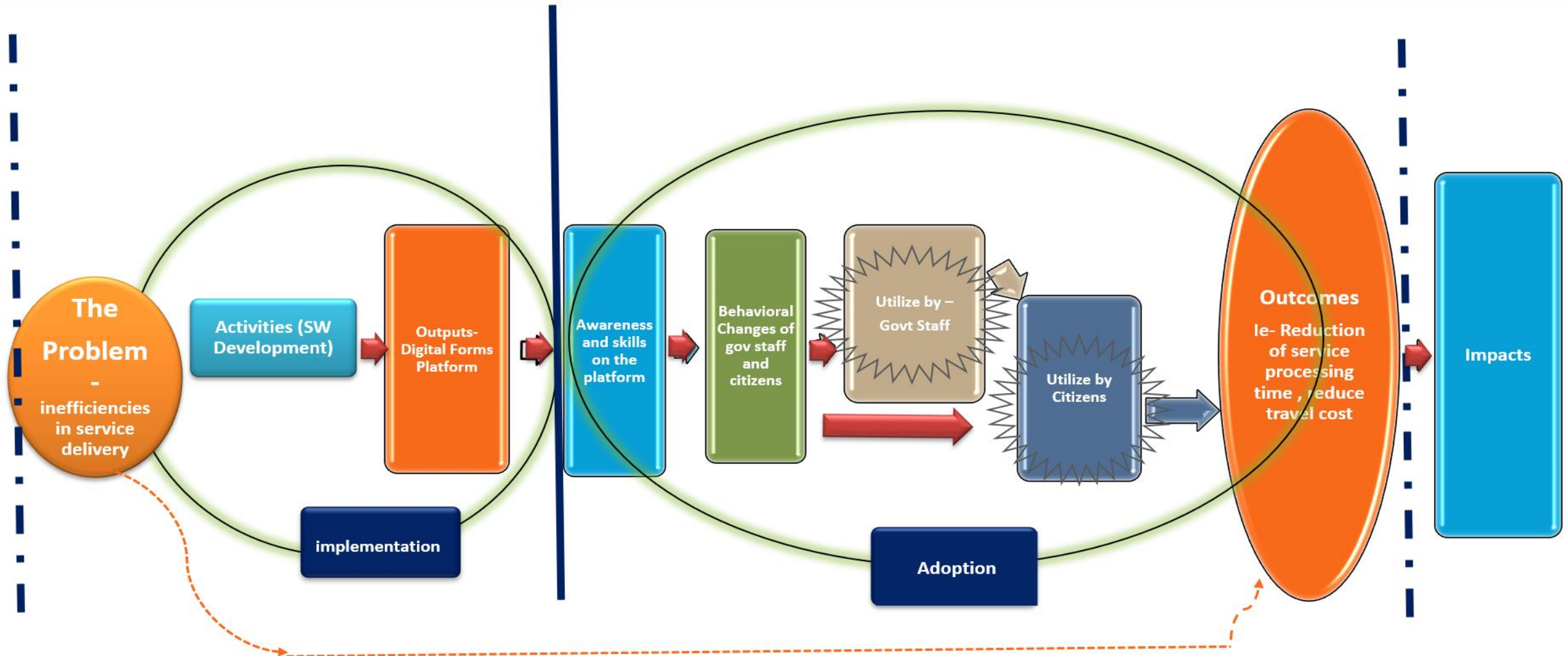|	How these funds were allocated to different organizations and activities are shown in **Table 2.** Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) Emergency Action Plan 2021/2022		
	Institute	**Total Cost**	
		US$ Mn.	**SLRs. Mn.**
1	Ministry of Agriculture	16.26	3,057
2	Ministry of Education	20.21	3,800
3	Ministry of Transport Services Management	11.30	2,124
4	Information and Communication Agency	5.95	1,118
5	Disaster Management – Disaster Management Centre and National Disaster Relief Services Centre	1.59	298
	Total	**56**	**10,491**

ICTA implemented CERC Components

	Component	Total Budget			
		USD Million		LKR Million	
		Initially approved budget	Revised budget in Mid '22	Initially approved budget	Revised budget in Mid '22
1.	Video Conference facilities to the Gov. Organizations (Target- 100 Gov Organizations)	0.45	0.43	84	128
2	Digital Forms Solution (DFS) form.Gov.lk platform	0.36	0.28	68	84
3	Email and Collaboration Solution	1.99	0.47	374	141
4	Cloud 2nd Zone (Disaster Recovery site)	3.05	3.13	574	930
5	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	0.10	0.06	18	17.8
	Total	5.95	4.38	1,118	1,303

Findings and Lessons Learned

Digital Forms Solution (Forms.Gov.lk) – Implementation Approach - Theory of Change
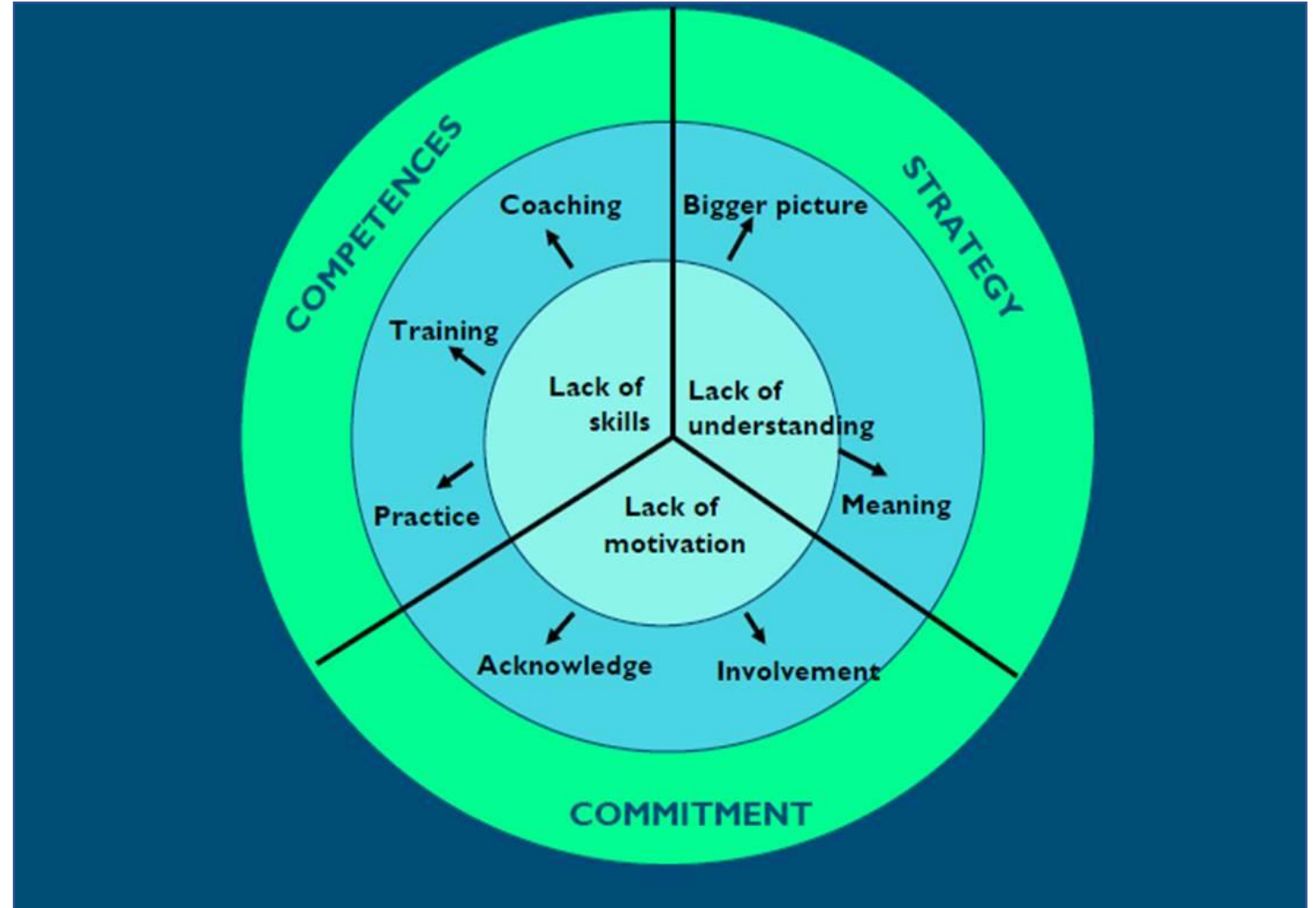
Digital Forms Solution (Forms.Gov.lk) implementation apprpach

Best Practices Adopted	Results achieved
1. Selection of Cost effective On-premises solution to implement DFS (Already operating Singapore Government (Forms.Gov.sg) open-source base platform)	**Cost effectiveness, scalability and data security**
	Minimum solution development / production cost /time
2. Implemented the solution with the assistance from the M&E team: Carry out a Readiness Assessment, prepared an Adoption Action Plan	**developed and customized the solutions suited for the country requirements**
	For local vendors - to gain new skills, knowledge, and experience useful for the country
3. More focus was given to engage the stakeholders throughout through a strong consultative process	**Ensure effective adoption of all beneficiary groups**
Baseline and final M&E Assessment Carried out	Measuring progress against expected results
Adopted appropriate Implementation Model – more focus was given on the following; × **Formulate ToC framework and log frame** × **Agree to pilot the system in a small sample and rollout the solution based on lessons learned** × **Stakeholder management, readiness assessment, adoption activities, skill development, attitudes and behavioural changes– recognized as a major component of the project**	Successfully completed the pilot implementation of the solution in selected organizations Ensured a budget and the MoT and NPD support for rollout the Solution
Regular follow up, ICTA team facilitate for × establishing an internal M&E system, WB bi weekly meetings × mechanism to motivate the operational staff × internal monitoring mechanism to ensure effective utilization of the solution within the organizations × agreeing the responsibilities of each team members of the organizations – HoD and Operational Staff	

Adoption of Digital Forms Solution

❑ During the consultation sessions carried out by ICTA it was identified that the huge resistance for innovations and technology adoption in the government organizations selected for the pilot

❑ Resistance was mainly due to negative attitudes, behavioral issues, lack of skills and motivation which need to be addressed as part of the project.

LGC 2ⁿᵈ Zone (930 Mn)

Objectives	To establish a disaster recovery (DR) site to ensure highly secured and reliable cloud infrastructure- To facilitate future demands of government hosting requirements with high reliability, efficiency, and effectiveness.
Findings	- The project work commenced in mid 2020 - The original plan was to adopt CapEx procurement model and Bid documents had been prepared accordingly. - However, subsequently ICTA had changed this model and started re-visiting the technology in lines with OpEX model through establishing a consortium comprising the service providers . - This process had significantly delayed the procurement process considerably and disrupted the implementation timeline. - when the bid document was ready in March 2022, costs had escalated to Rs 900 million, primarily due to sudden depreciation - However, by the time approvals were taken to append the cost estimates, it was noted that completion of installations would go beyond CERC completion date. - As such entire LGC 2.0 component had to be dropped.
Lessons learned	- Originally planned approach changed without considering the available project time frame. - There is no consultative process in making significant project decisions. The world bank team, ICTA appointed steering committee and the project focal point completely excluded in taking the decision - Due to the authoritative decision huge economic loss to the country and lead for stakeholder issues - During the planning process the Project Design and Implementation Team should be clearly informed the nature of procurement model they should follow to avoid revisiting the technology once the designs are made. This decision must be made considering not only the technical aspects but also the long-term affordability.

EMail and Collaborative Solution (141 mn)

Objectives	to implement a government wide email and collaboration solution, with an aim of reaching 100,000 Government officials to use government email addresses.
Findings	× The Original ICTA approach was to implement an on-premises solutions which was considered as secure and cost effective in the long run to a country like Sri Lanka which has limited foreign reserves. The software was to be developed by ICTA as a CAPEX model and host them in the government Cloud, LGC 2.0. This method was agreed by all the stakeholders including World Bank Team.
	× However, original tender prepared on these lines had been cancelled suddenly, just few hours before closing of the bids, and new decision had been taken to change the approach towards a commercial -cloud design.
	× Subsequently it was able to get the WB and cabinet approval for the new model which was time consuming. This delay was significantly affected project time frame.
	× The new plan was to enrol the users in batches from August to November 2022. under CERC only possible to fund the initial monthly subscription costs for 30,000 users up to December 2022.
	× Any payment after 30 December 2022 must be funded by the government as the CERC closed by end of 2022.
	× The subscriptions must be paid monthly in US$ terms and the requirement for 2023 had been estimated at 1.5 US$ per account per month.
	× Before going through the procurement, ICTA had to confirm funds required after the CERC and not received a firm commitment from the government to provide funding in USD beyond the CERC project period .
	× However, by May 2022 this activity was cancelled by NPD due to the uncertainties and risks of financial sustainability,
Lessons Learned	× Originally planned approach change without considering the available project time frame.
	× There is no consultative process adopted in taking important decisions to change the model. The world bank team, ICTA appointed steering committee and the project focal point excluded in taking the decision and this lead for huge economic loss to the country.
	× ***The selected solution should not only provide ideal technical sound, but also affordable to the country in the long run, especially when annual subscription payments are involved in foreign currencies.***

Video Con facility for 100 gov organizations (128 mn)

Objectives	To improve the efficiency, productivity and speed-up decision making process of the government offices. To reduce cost and time spend by the Government officials on traveling to attend various essential official meetings.
Findings	- In September 2021, technical specifications had been re-designed with an improved approach where hardware components were separated form software components. - Video conferencing software component was to be procured with the email collaboration solution and hardware will be procured separately. - Hardware tender had been awarded by March 2022 for LKR 124Mn - However, due to drastic fluctuations of the USD vendor had informed ICTA its inability to perform unless some import payments were to be made in US dollars. - However, the World Bank after careful review of the procurement guild lines, informed that the request made could not be met. - AS the vendor failed to perform NPD in consultation with the World Bank dropped the component
Lessons learned	- when foreign currencies are involved in procuring imported items, it may be worth trying by asking the bidder in the RFB to provided cost in USD terms and in Rupees for local components - During the planning process the Project Design and Implementation Team should be clearly informed the nature of procurement model they should follow to avoid revisiting the technology once the designs are made. - This decision must be made considering not only the technical aspects but also the long-term affordability.

Overall Recommendations for the sustainability of - DFS

- *Adoption Action Plan needs to be implemented focusing on capacity building requirements, behavioral changes of the beneficiaries. Hands-on training and skill development*

- *ICTA should support the selected organizations to develop required policies, strategies, and monitoring plans to bring about conducive organizational culture to support the adoption of solutions in their organizations*

- *Regular follows up with the HoDs and prepare a real time dashboard to monitor the progress of utilization is required, based on the monitoring data required corrective action needs to be taken.*

- *Undertake a separate study to develop a suitable strategy to promote DFS among the Grama Niladharies*

- *ICTA needs to initiate effective strategic communication programs to enhance the public awareness of citizens to understand the benefits of DFS and to adopt it effectively*

- *Conduct a demonstration to develop the skills to upload the digitized forms and Introduce a help desk at the appropriate organizations to support the adoption of DFS*

- *Conduct programs to eliminate any doubts about the security and trustworthiness of the platform*

Overall Recommendations based on CERC lessons learned

- Decision making processes can have impact on the project implementation and results.

- Frequent changes in key decision makers could delay the implementation when the original procurement models are changed to accommodate new thinking.

- As observed, ICTA had four chairmen during the CERC implementation period, where some made drastic changes had been to the mode of implementation, which had contributed to cancelling of projects.

- Top management of Project components must take responsibility of convincing the Board and the ICTA Management on the benefits of this kind of valuable projects would bring to the country and other importance aspects such as project timelines, limitations of funding and importance of affordable technology rather than going for state of the art, expensive foreign exchange-based solutions.

Overall Recommendations based on CERC lessons learned

- *In the project planning and designing phase more focus should be given to a comprehensive results-based plan and theory of change framework, as applied by the DFS project*

- *The selected project should be of technology feasible, economically viable, and socially acceptable. Affordability is a key factor in decision making.*

- *Project should have a timeline with clearly identified key milestones to facilitate monitoring and to ensure its timely completion*

- *There should be an effective and empowered project steering committee to take appropriate timely and valid decisions to clear the bottlenecks and to ensure smooth and timely completion of the project, avoiding huge opportunity costs to the country*

- *Each implemented project needs to conduct a baseline assessment at the commencement and outcome evaluations immediately after completion and then in about two years - to determine whether intended results have been achieved and recommend any corrective actions to improve the outcomes and sustainability.*

Thank you