ROLE OF SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS (SAIS) IN GOVERNMENTS’ RESPONSE TO COVID19: EMERGENCY AND POST-EMERGENCY PHASES

Edward Olowo-Okere, Global Director, Governance Global Practice
COVID19: The bigger picture

World Bank Response

✓ Swift response with projects in 100 countries
✓ USD 160 billion over 15 months
✓ Protect lives
✓ Protect poor & vulnerable
✓ Bolster economic recovery, and help maintain the private sector
✓ Knowledge and partnership

WBG Governance Global Practice Response

✓ Series of policy notes on Governance & Institutions (eg: State Continuity, Agile treasury operations, ensuring integrity during COVID19, etc)
✓ Tracking of policy actions of Governments for advisory support
✓ Global knowledge events and partnership

Unprecedented risks to public revenues and expenses during in COVID19

✓ Traditional PFM controls modified / diluted
✓ Abuse of emergency procedures
✓ Quick budget changes & borrowing
✓ Difficulty in capturing COVID19 expenses
✓ Increased risks of fraud and corruption
✓ Market failure & single source procurements at abnormal price
✓ Role of SAI critical for ensuring integrity of public finances, and securing transparency and accountability.
The Role of SAIs in Governments’ Response to COVID-19

Emergency phase: Be safe, monitor Government actions, conduct audits, prepare, and protect independence

➢ Prioritize safety of people, including audit and auditee staff
➢ Raise awareness among stakeholders on the risks of emergency activities based on insights from previous audit findings
➢ Take advantage of remote audit technology to continue audit operations or initiate real-time audits on COVID-19
➢ Secure audit trails on COVID-19 through monitoring, documenting and analyzing government responses
➢ Enhance capacity through sharing of knowledge and experiences on COVID-19 with peers
➢ Keep communicating with key stakeholders and ensure the establishment of adequate built-in oversight mechanisms in government emergency relief packages
➢ Protect SAI independence and financial resources

Post-Emergency phase: Deliver timely audit products to support corrective actions & strengthen system resilience

➢ Plan combinations of compliance, financial and performance audits in COVID-19 response context
➢ Provide advance information to the auditee teams so they are adequately prepared
➢ Use the government’s own assessments of COVID19 response and build on them
➢ Use professional judgment to contextualize conclusions
➢ Develop approaches for expenditure from blended funding sources
➢ Use GovTech solutions like Artificial intelligence
➢ Ensure timely audit output; short and quick reports could be impactful
➢ Coordinate with Internal audit, Anti-corruption agency etc
➢ Consider cooperative audits – regional joint or parallel audits