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Preface: Ending Corrupting in Public Procurement

Public procurement makes up 20 percent of the world's economy, yet complete information is publicly available on less than 3 percent of these funds spent with the intention of serving communities and citizens, according to Open Government Partnership. Up to one-fourth of procurement funds are lost to corruption, various researchers estimate, depriving citizens of public services on which they depend.

There is growing evidence that one of the keys to preventing and remedying corruption in public procurement is by enhancing collaboration among state institutions and civil society organisations. Because public officials and CSOs have a common interest to ensure public funds are spent honestly and transparently, they are well positioned to collaborate toward accomplishing this shared goal. This was brought into focus by a Resolution passed at the 10th UNCAC Conference of the States Parties (COSP) in Atlanta in December 2023.

Inspired by this Resolution, the Team Europe Democracy (TED) Network placed state-CSO collaboration at the top the agenda for its Working Group meeting on accountability and rule of law. Participants met on 27 February 2024 to discuss how to nurture this collaboration. Many examples of successful collaboration were presented – including joint efforts that lowered costs, increased competition, improved oversight, reduced corruption, opened investigations, and grew the expertise of CSOs and state institutions alike.

Highlights of the Working Group's meeting are presented here, including best practices, effective tools and recommendations for future reform efforts. The expertise of CSOs in the field of procurement and public administration in general was acknowledged, as was the fact that civil society and public institutions have shared concerns around which they can work cooperatively.



1 Introduction: A Consensus for Change

The growing need to ensure this money is spent more honestly and responsibly was at the centre of the second meeting of the Working Group on Accountability and Rule of Law of the Team Europe Democracy (TED) Network, held on 27 February 2024. Sixty people joined the meeting online, which was co-chaired by representatives from France and Sweden. The meeting followed up the Resolution on “Promoting transparency and integrity in public procurement in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” adopted at the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) Conference of the States Parties in Atlanta in December 2023.

The Resolution discusses how corruption stifles competition, wastes public funds, harms public administration, and excludes women, vulnerable people and small business owners. It calls for reforms, including stronger open data, digital tools, public oversight, and collaboration between state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs).

The TED Network’s Working Group met to discuss putting the Resolution into action, improving collaboration among public institutions and civil society, and sharing best practices for this cooperation. Speakers at the meeting agreed that government-CSO collaboration is a proven way to develop, promote and implement needed reforms in procurement. They said that drafting, negotiating and passing the COSP Resolution in itself reflects the benefit of this collaboration – and how coalition building can bring about positive change. If an agreement could be reached on the content and timing of the Resolution, this could lead to agreements on how best implement the reforms it proposes.

Leading up to COSP meeting 115 CSOs sent an open letter to delegates saying that achieving Sustainable Development Goals, including climate-resilient infrastructure and quality education, depends on corruption-free public procurement. Participants described the difficult but productive negotiations between officials and CSOs that led to the passage of the Resolution, which required trust, dialogue, a common understanding of challenges, and a willingness to compromise. Because it was shaped over time by people working together, the Resolution benefits from buy-in and a shared vision.

Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) welcomed the Resolution and said it offers a clear set of next steps, including guidelines, case studies and follow-up work. Greater civic participation and public accountability are the “next frontiers,” according to OCP, noting how independent evaluations show that government-CSO collaboration works.

Jamie Smith of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) concluded the session by reemphasizing the need for collaboration and saying it is important to acknowledge victories. In moving forward, Smith said advocates should work to identify pockets of reform-minded officials. Kristen Robinson of OCP said every government has its own priorities, and advocates should find common interests when possible.

Continuing government-CSO collaboration, and learning from past successes of these joint efforts, will improve the likelihood that the Resolution’s proposals will be realized, the speakers remarked.

Among other CSOs that provided input to the Network meeting, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute stressed the importance of providing access to procurement decision-making procedures and their consequences for society and citizens. Businesses have an important role in corruption prevention,



the group said, adding that ethical conduct is more than avoiding criminal acts but also about institutional work cultures and routine practices.

Protection International said countries use laws and the lack of means as excuses not to publish open data. Simplification and standardization will help the public access and understand the data, which will make it more difficult for states to commit procurement fraud. At the same time, openness will make it easier for NGOs, the institutions such as the UN and EU to make comparisons among countries.

With the Resolution in place, attention can now be turned building support for reforms and deepening collaboration among all stakeholders.



2 Best practices for state and CSO collaboration to increase integrity in public procurement

The Working Group meeting, as well as a survey shared with participants beforehand, offered the opportunity for members to share their experiences, knowledge and goals. The survey asked members to comment on the Resolution's provisions on transparency and inclusive public participation in procurement, and the handling, collecting and publishing of data. Several organizations presented details of their work in the field of public procurement and discussed their specific efforts to deepen CSO-government cooperation. In particular, they spoke about what works and why. All agreed that meaningful, goal-oriented collaboration can create the conditions for reforms and positive change.

These best practices are informed by results of the participant survey, discussions during the Working Group meeting, conversations with meeting participants and additional desk research.

2.1 Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) discussed the necessity to scrutinize the entire procurement cycle in order to enhance accountability and reduce corruption. It cited a lack of political will to establish open data and integrated electronic procurement systems. Once open data systems are set up, their success will depend on public awareness and engagement; it is essential for the value of open data to be understood.

GIZ also noted the risks of civic monitoring in countries where CSO space is shrinking and criticism of public officials is prohibited or restricted.

They presented three examples of its work in the field of procurement:

- [Strengthening good governance and civil society in Uganda](#) – CSOs and Uganda's Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) launched the digital Contract Monitoring System in April 2022. Since then, 560 civil society monitors have examined 345 projects. CSOs are able to identify concerns with contracts and report them to public authorities. This helps the PPDA conduct more effective audits and investigations.
- [Alliance for Integrity](#) – a global, business-driven initiative that promotes transparency and integrity in economic systems, including preventing corruption in procurement. The Alliance fosters cooperation between CSOs, and the public and the private sectors, and offers practical solutions to strengthen the compliance capacities of companies and their supply chains.
- [Opening-up climate finance to public scrutiny in South Africa](#) – supporting the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative to improve transparency, CSO participation and accountability in climate-relevant infrastructure. The project's Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard regulates which data should be disclosed in various phases of an infrastructure project, and the Infrastructure Transparency Index reflects the level of transparency of infrastructure procedures.

The GIZ said these and other projects tap into CSO potential that already exists and empower groups to have more impact, particularly in terms of government reforms.

2.2 MAPS

The only such tool of its kind, MAPS – or [Methodology for Assessing Procurement Systems](#) – can be used to evaluate any public procurement system anywhere in the world. Hosted by the OECD, MAPS can be used by any country regardless of its income level or development status. Dozens of



countries have used the system since 2003 to learn what works in their procurement system and what does not, and to develop needed reforms. It has been updated in 2018 to include emerging issues such as e-procurement and sustainability.

MAPS helps countries to build modern, efficient, sustainable and more inclusive procurement systems in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Among many indicators, MAPS measures whether a country has effective control and audit systems, efficient procurement appeals mechanisms, ethics and anti-corruption measures, transparency and CSO engagement, access to public information, and an environment for public consultation and monitoring.

Among MAPS' many successes:

- In the Philippines, which allots 60 percent of its budget to public contracts, a MAPS assessment led Congress to consider amendments to the national procurement law, including more oversight and controls, beneficial ownership disclosure and sustainable procurement partnerships.
- In Norway, a MAPS assessment informed the government's strategic action plan on sustainable procurement. Other recommendations include advancing on system interoperability for the whole procurement cycle, more data gathering and performance monitoring, and monitoring the performance of the central purchasing agency.
- In Greece, MAPS recommendations include streamlining procurement governance by reducing the fragmentation of responsibilities, upgrading e-procurement and information systems, making data open and usable, and increasing professionalization of procurement officers.

2.3 Open Contracting Partnership

OCP shared how CSOs and public officials have worked together to open up and improve integrity in procurement in Indonesia, where about 40 percent of corruption cases involve public contracts. The *National Public Procurement Agency* (LKPP) has introduced reforms to improve access to information, including an e-procurement system to documentation. Enforcement regulations were introduced nationwide, and designated procurement units were set up in all 657 national and subnational government agencies to professionalize their work.

Working with the CSO Indonesia Corruption Watch, LKPP created an online risk-monitoring tool called [Opentender.net](#) where anyone can analyse data on more than 1.8 million tenders. More than 1,000 transparency advocates, researchers, journalists and auditors have been trained in using the system to detect suspicious contracting activity.

The results have been significant. It is estimated that Opentender.net could increase the number of quarterly audits from 10 to 30 and reduce the length of audits from 2 days to 30 minutes. Complaints have led to convictions in at least five high-profile corruption cases valued at some USD 18 million. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has fielded more procurement corruption cases, from 9 cases in 2013 to 47 in 2021.

Worldwide, OCP has identified than 50 countries and cities that are pursuing procurement reforms. The Dominican Republic is fighting corruption with open data and better processes and collaboration. In Kazakhstan, oversight has improved and millions of dollars have been saved. In Paraguay, more contracting opportunities have been opened for micro, small, and medium enterprises.

2.4 Open Government Partnership

OGP noted that the number of its members focusing on procurement has grown to 87, in 62 countries and 25 local jurisdictions. This has led to nearly 300 commitments to improve procurement practices. More than a fourth of these commitments have achieved strong results, demonstrating the effectiveness of formal collaboration.



Among the remaining shortcomings OGP has identified, datasets typically do not cover all procurement steps such as the planning phase and contract implementation, some datasets do not include information on contract specifics such as contract values, and a third of OGP countries that publish procurement data online do not provide data in a machine-readable format.

The organisation presented three examples of its work:

- [Ensuring Accountability in Ukraine](#) – reformers leveraged OGP to use the platforms ProZorro and DoZorro to open opaque contracts and empower citizens to report violations. This led to 14,000 reports, more than half of which were resolved. More than 100 criminal procedures were opened, USD 1 billion was saved, and 80 percent of businesses said corruption had been reduced. These efforts have grown trust and a level playing field, raising the number of bidders and government suppliers.
- [Making Procurement Data User-Friendly in Finland](#) – Finland committed to opening procurement data in its 2017 OGP action plan. Since an online service was published, government transparency has improved and the system has won many awards.
- [Increasing Competition Through Open Contracting in Colombia](#) – contracting reforms have led to successes in improving competition and increasing suppliers. For example, Colombia transitioned from a static contracting platform to an interactive, dynamic one.

OGP said the group has been successful in using anti-corruption action plans – which are domestically created and owned – to build political will within pockets of government.

2.5 Transparency International

TI introduced the features and successful application of the [Integrity Pact](#) as a civic monitoring tool to improve governance and prevent corruption in procurement. An Integrity Pact establishes a framework for oversight throughout the entire public procurement cycle, including budget commitment/procurement, contract award, implementation and oversight. It includes anti-corruption commitments by authorities and suppliers, an independent CSO monitoring mechanism, and dispute resolution mechanisms and sanctions. Among other goals the Pacts seek to identify revolving doors, conflicts of interest and undue influence.

Two examples include:

- [Civil Control Mechanism for Safeguarding EU Funds](#) – since 2016 TI has partnered with the European Commission's DG REGIO and 15 CSOs to monitor 18 EU-supported public projects in 11 countries valued at more than EUR 920 million. The project has resolved irregularities, increased trust and strengthened the integrity capacity of authorities and bidders.
- [Integrity Pact in Honduras](#) – the procurement of pharmaceutical drugs was monitored from 2017-21, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Asociación por una Sociedad más Justa. The capacity of 200 public officials was strengthened, the number of suppliers rose from 19 to more than 40, inflation was reduced and prices were stabilized, according to TI.

2.6 Other examples and best practices

Around the world, there is growing cooperation between CSOs and public institutions to make public procurement more transparent, accountable and inclusive. Here are examples and analyses of some of these initiatives. Further developing this catalogue would support the identification and promotion of best practices, which could assist and support public institutions, CSOs and other stakeholders.

[A New Role for Citizens in Public Procurement](#)

This comprehensive analysis looks at emerging trends for citizen participation and oversight, and the role open data and its management can play in future procurement monitoring instruments. To encourage more citizens to get involved in the global discussion, examples and practices from around the world are presented – from Brazil, Cameroon, Kenya, Mexico, Slovakia and Timor-Leste. The authors conclude these examples prove that reforms depend on appropriate informant flows and knowledge hubs. The study discusses opportunities and



incentives for CSOs and citizens to become more engaged in their government. It discusses how to overcome institutional and other barriers, such as poor access to informant and a lack of technical knowledge, and the factors to consider when deciding which monitoring techniques to employ and which projects to monitor. Importantly, the analysis presents success stories as well as common mistakes. The study provides a solid foundation for government-CSO collaboration, advocacy techniques and policy reforms.

[Strengthening the Capacity of CSOs to Promote Transparency and Accountability in Public Infrastructure Projects in Malawi](#)

This project improved CSO capacity to monitor public procurement in a wide range of infrastructure projects in Malawi, particularly water supply, sanitation, transportation, roads and buildings; and advocate for increased transparency and accountability in project preparation and implementation. The project helped NGOs and citizens improve their legal and technical skills in order to engage more meaningfully. The many results include increased political commitment to integrity in procurement, better enforcement of laws and regulations, better CSO monitoring of publicly financed projects, and more CSO demands for accountability. Importantly, the effort aligned with the goals of the Open Governance Partnership and synchronized with portions of Malawi's OGP National Action Plan.

[Civil society efforts contribute to strengthening public procurement and whistle-blower protection systems in Southern Africa](#)

CSOs and public officials from eight countries in Southern Africa collaborated on the issue of whistleblower protection and public procurement. Knowledge and enforcement gaps, and ways forward were identified at workshops held in 2022. Specifically, external reporting practices and the roles of CSOs in receiving and handling whistleblower reports were explored. CSOs were identified as having tangible impacts in filling enforcement gaps. Also presented was a procurement "checklist" used by communities with regard to procurement by district-level health and education institutions. The sessions focused on effective engagement and oversight tools that can be replicated elsewhere.

[Participation of Civil Society in Public Procurement: Case Studies from the Philippines](#)

This exploration of the Philippines' procurement system focuses on a unique feature of citizen participation. An improved procurement code passed in 2003 employs several mechanisms to prevent corruption, including the first-time utilization of citizen observers. A legislator in the Philippines provides insights into the procurement system and its mechanisms, and the code's focus on anti-corruption. Included are case studies of CSO engagement and the development of proposals to improve efficiency, integrity and transparency of citizen participation in procurement.

[CSOs in Procurement Monitoring: Prospects and Challenges in the Philippines](#)

This review of CSO monitoring of procurement in the Philippines includes a flowchart of CSO engagement – from tender advertisement and bid submission, to bid evaluation and ranking, to contract award and post-delivery inspection. Tools developed by CSOs include an infrastructure monitoring manual, a public bidding checklist, an infrastructure watch toolkit, and medicine and road monitoring tools. The School Watch initiative monitored furniture and school construction to check building materials and the quality and quantity of armchairs. Among the many impacts, textbook prices were cut in half due to competitive bidding, pharmaceutical prices were lowered by an average of 27 percent, bidding time was shortened by half, compliance with registration rules doubled, and the number of registered suppliers increased 14-fold. Emphasis is placed on having a clear plan to advocate on evidence, and linking with the media and formal processes to hold government to account.

[Increasing and Sustaining Civil Society Organization's \(CSO\) Participation in Public Procurement Processes](#)



This project aims to increase and sustain CSO participation in procurement processes. This includes monitoring through contract implementation in order to improve the management and utilization of public funds. It also serves as a deterrent against graft and corruption in implementing crucial programs and projects of the Philippines' Department of Education. Pilot CSO engagement programs were developed in three cities to grow social awareness and CSO capacity, organize local CSOs and Department offices, and monitor and evaluate the engagement. MOUs between CSOs and the Department were signed, and a database of trained CSOs was developed to aid in the monitoring.

[Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement in Moldova](#)

This project enhanced the capacity of CSOs and journalists to carry out informed and responsible monitoring of procurement, with a goal of enhancing transparency and fairness of the system. CSOs, journalists and other stakeholders were trained to understand the risks of abuse in procurement, identify red flags and professionally monitor procurement at all stages. They also were trained in analysing procurement data and requesting official investigations by law enforcement and other authorities. One tool developed to facilitate monitoring was the e-procurement platform Mtender. Overall, the project stressed a systematic approach including analytical tools, access to reliable data, and checklists that cover different stages of procurement.

[National and Local CSOs Join Hands in Monitoring Government Expenditures](#)

CSOs in Kosovo with a track record of monitoring public procurement are expanding their work to more municipalities by supporting local groups. The CSOs monitor park and highway overpass construction, road paving and procurement of medical supplies. The work is led by CiviKos, a network of more than 240 CSOs that are active nationally and locally. Local CSOs obtain practical skills and knowledge via workshop-style group work and individual coaching. Activists meet with municipal officials to assess whether goods and services meet contractual obligations. When they discover red flags or evidence of mismanagement, they refer the information to public authorities for investigation. Their findings accessible are made available to the public

[Supporting CSOs to monitor procurement activities municipalities and Ministry of Health](#)

To date, CSO engagement and media coverage of procurement irregularities has been limited. This project worked to increase transparency and accountability of local governments by monitoring local and central procurement activities. Co-led by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), the initiative featured direct monitoring of contracts, comprehensive research, and media coverage to generate public pressure for remedial actions and best practices. A report documented public spending abuses, institutional wrongdoings and corrupt actions. The project sought to address the problem of irregularities being ignored because public officials were involved with the misconduct.

[Advancing Accountability in Public Procurement in the Kyrgyz Republic through Locally Led Development](#)

A group of CSOs holds regular meetings, forms joint positions, and monitors procurement to improve transparency, accountability and the management of public funds. The coalition serves as a platform for CSOs to engage with procurement officials at the Ministry of Finance to share concerns on contracts and demand transparency. Rather than a top-down approach, the effort is guided by the priorities of project partners that have first-hand knowledge of problems and concerns. Results include a simplification of procurement processes, training of procurement officials, better ability of CSO and auditors to identify irregularities, and the launch of the e-Contract Management Module, which is intended to speed tendering, reduce corruption and increase efficiency.

[Public Procurement Transparency Initiative in Nepal](#)

This open data initiative in Nepal has established a single public repository of data on procurement. The repository includes information on 17,000 bids, 4,800 tenders, 2,600 bidders and 900 procuring entities. Managed by Nepal's Public Procurement Monitoring



Office, the system is being implemented with Open Contracting Partnership. It is publicized by Open Nepal, a knowledge hub for organizations and people that produce, share and use open. It is expected that the repository will include data on successful bids, contracts and implementation. It seeks to achieve value for money for government, strengthen the transparency, accountability and integrity of contracting, enable companies to fairly compete for contracts, and monitor the effectiveness of service delivery. It also has developed standards for publishing data.



3 Conclusions and recommendations

The Working Group meeting provides momentum toward achieving the goals of workstream 1.2 on accountability and anti-corruption. Among these goals are more efficient anti-corruption efforts in partner countries, more CSO inclusion and collaboration, identifying and sharing good anti-corruption practices, and employing multi-actor approaches. The level of agreement and positivity exhibited at the meeting provides encouragement that these goals can be realized.

A number of actions and steps are recommended in order to advance the Working Group's agenda:

For development partners:

- *Identify best examples of open government data:* All available examples of efficient open procurement data should be catalogued and made available to key stakeholders.
- *Develop new tools:* new tools for increasing integrity in public procurement should be designed in collaboration with relevant experts based on specific needs and gaps.

For civil society:

- *Increase CSO involvement:* more CSOs specializing in procurement, open data and citizen monitoring should share lessons learnt and best practices with the TED Network. Local and grassroots groups are of particular value.
- *Identify best examples of successful collaboration:* All available examples of effective cooperation among CSOs and public institutions should be catalogued and made available to key stakeholders.

For all parties:

- *Catalogue and disseminate effective tools:* successful monitoring, open data and other tools – as most strongly highlighted with MAPS, should be proactively shared with public officials, CSOs, experts and others who have a role in improving procurement practices. A comprehensive catalogue of these tools should be built.

Organising additional and separate bilateral consultations and/or focus group discussions could be held to gather evidence and exchanges on best practices among members who showed a high level of responsiveness. Also, outreach could be made to the organisations implementing the projects/programs identified in the context of the desk research. It is also recommended to ensure that MSs and other organisations facilitate this exercise by granting direct access and establishing contact with the implementing partners and actors on the ground in order to evaluate best practices and approaches and assess their replicability.

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