

## Chapter 16

# Public Procurement Reform in Developing Countries: The Uganda Experience

*Edgar Agaba and Nigel Shipman*

### INTRODUCTION: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT REFORM IN DEVELOPING AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimated the value of the government procurement market to be US\$2,000 billion in 1998, which was equivalent to 7% of world gross domestic product (GDP) and 30% of world merchandise trade (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002, p. 8). It has been estimated that between US\$30 to US\$43 billion could be available in the procurement marketplace in Sub-Saharan Africa (Wittig, 1999, p. 8). Most industrialised countries spend at least 10% of their GDP on public procurement (Trionfetti, 2003, p. 224).

Consequently, developed and developing countries have need for a well-functioning public procurement system. This is particularly true for developing countries, where procurement usually accounts for a high proportion of total expenditure, e.g., 40% in Malawi and 70% in Uganda, compared with a global average of 12-20% (Development Assistance Committee, 2005, p. 18).

In most developed countries, public procurement takes place within a framework of international obligations, such as the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Government Procurement or the Procurement Directives made under regional agreements such as the European Union or the North America Free Trade Agreement. Public procurement in most developing countries does not have to meet these international requirements. Consequently, the pressure to reform may not have been as strong and some developing countries retained a procurement system that differed little from that which was in place during colonial times. However, in recent years, the impetus for reform has increased, partly in consequence of

requirements set by the World Bank and other donor organisations as conditions for providing development aid but principally because the inefficiencies of the unreformed systems have become self-evident. Most donors consider that a well-functioning procurement system is an essential requirement if their funds are to be used effectively to promote development. Where such a system is not provided by the host country, donors may insist on using their own procedures. There has been a trend in recent years for using national systems where these are suitable, through multi-donor budget support programmes (Abeillé 2003). As most developing countries prefer the flexibility that comes with receiving development aid through budget support, they have an incentive to reform their public procurement and financial management systems.

#### **FEATURES OF THE UNREFORMED SYSTEM**

The features of the Ugandan public procurement system prior to the inception of the reform programme in the late 1990s were typical of many developing African countries that were at one time British colonies or protectorates. Procurement was centralised, with contracts above a threshold value of US\$1,000 being awarded by a Central Tender Board in the Ministry of Finance, on the basis of regulations that had been approved in 1977. There were separate tender boards for the Police and Military. Procurement of many items on behalf of ministries was undertaken by the Government Central Purchasing Corporation. The Corporation had been set up by statute in 1990, replacing a central purchasing organisation within the civil service. While these arrangements offered the advantages of consolidated purchasing and central control, the Central Tender Board was unable to keep pace with the expansion of government activities and their attendant procurement requirements. There was a consequential backlog of tender submissions and the procurement process became protracted. International and foreign aid organisations, which account for nearly half of all development expenditure in Uganda, considered public procurement to be a key obstacle to effective service delivery and development.

A study of the changes that were needed in the procurement system (Task Force on Public Procurement Reform, 1999) reported that

- Guidance for the current procurement system was scattered among various outdated regulations and procedures;
- Little action was taken to ensure that the procurement process complied with established regulations and procedures;
- There were no clear lines of public accountability in the procurement process and little transparency;
- There was little institutional coordination;
- Operating through cash budgets and with inadequate financial planning, the government was an unreliable business partner and suppliers frequently suffered delays in receiving payment for goods and services supplied; consequently bidders sought to offset these risks by higher prices;
- The system suffered from various forms of malpractice and unethical conduct, including a high incidence of vested interests, interference and insider dealings and occasional cases of retrospective approval of contract awards; and
- There was a lack of professional knowledge and expertise in the purchasing and contracting function at all levels.

#### **DESIRED OUTCOMES OF PROCUREMENT REFORM**

In advocating the need for procurement reform, the Task Force considered the desired outcomes to be as follows:

1. Transparency, characterised by
  - Well-defined regulations and procedures open to public scrutiny;
  - Clear, standardised tender documents containing complete information; and
  - Equal opportunity for all in the bidding process;
2. A more effective means for fighting waste and corruption and improving financial accountability;
3. Integration of the public procurement system with national budgeting procedures;
4. A more attractive investment climate by lowering risk;

5. Greater competitive pressure to satisfy customer needs; and
6. A streamlined procurement process through greater use of electronic commerce.

Foremost among these desired outcomes was a substantial reduction in corruption. The Inspector General of Government, who acts both as the Ombudsman against inefficiencies and abuse of power and as the chief protagonist against corruption in the public sector, had claimed that

There is still a lot of corruption in our public procurement system. Most of this corruption is not known because it is done in utmost secrecy. It is, however, manifested in wrong computation of costs by evaluation teams, shoddy commodities and goods, poor performance of construction works, failure to complete performance of contracts on time or not at all, etc. (Task Force on Public Procurement Reform, 1999, p. 14)

In an essay entitled "Obstacles to Public Procurement Reform in Developing Countries", Robert Hunja, a Senior Procurement Specialist at the World Bank, described the aim of the reform programme in many developing countries as being to establish a strong and well-functioning procurement system that is governed by a clear legal framework establishing rules for transparency, efficiency and mechanisms of enforcement, coupled with an institutional arrangement that ensures consistency in overall policy formulation and implementation (Hunja, 2003)

Other desired outcomes included the following:

1. A professional cadre of staff that implements and manages the procurement function.
2. A competitive and transparent procurement process with strong self-reinforcing mechanisms providing for
  - Wide advertising of upcoming procurement opportunities,
  - Public opening of bids,
  - Pre-disclosure of all relevant information,
  - Clear accountabilities for decision making, and
  - An enforceable right of review for bidders.

3. An entity within government that is charged with overall responsibility for formulating procurement policy and ensuring that the system is functioning properly.

Similar aims have been presented at various international conferences on procurement reform (e.g., Wittig, 1999).

A framework for evaluating a developing country's public procurement system has been devised by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), together with the World Bank, at a series of Round Table conferences for developing countries and bilateral and multilateral donors (Development Assistance Committee, 2005). The aim has been to develop an integrated set of tools and good practices to improve procurement systems and the outcomes they produce and to assist in the periodical assessments of the domestic legislation. Various benchmarks establish whether the elements of a well-functioning public procurement system are in place.

The benchmarks are based on four pillars, each of which contains a number of indicators:

**Pillar I: Legislative and regulatory framework**

- Procurement legislative and regulatory framework in compliance with applicable obligations derived from national and international requirements
- Availability of implementing regulations, documentation and tools to support implementation

**Pillar II: Institutional framework and management capacity**

- Degree of mainstreaming and integration into Public Financial Management System
- Existence of a functional management/regulatory body
- Existence of institutional development capacity

**Pillar III: Procurement operations and market practices**

- Efficiency of procurement operations and practices,
- Functionality of the public procurement market, and
- Existence of contract administration and dispute resolution provisions.

**Pillar IV: The integrity of the public procurement system**

- Existence of effective control and audit systems,
- Existence and efficiency of the appeals mechanism,
- Degree of access to information, and
- Existence of ethics and anti-corruption measures.

Each of these indicators is defined against a desirable “good practice standard” that can be used to determine the degree of achievement of a procurement system. These indicators form part of the measures that were adopted by the Johannesburg Declaration of December 2004.

**STAGES IN THE PROCUREMENT REFORM PROCESS AND THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

The public procurement process may be viewed as proceeding through various stages of progression. It has been argued (Walker, 2003, pp. 3-12) that public procurement reform is most likely to succeed when it proceeds through a six-step process, viz.:

- Support from highest political levels: this is seen as necessary for any organisational change to succeed, as it avoids any doubt about the government’s commitment to reform;
- Publicity about the advantages of the new system;
- Cooperation between the public and private sector leading to better understanding of each others’ problems and needs;
- Good procurement training: to raise the skills of procurement staff and to familiarise suppliers with the requirements of the reformed system;
- Good procurement legislation: both primary legislation and secondary implementing legislation; and
- Establishment of a central public procurement office for overall policy making and supervision of public procurement in the country.

However, the nature and the order of progression of each stage may vary according to local circumstances. It may be argued that the legislative framework and the central regulatory body should be in

place at an early stage, so that the training and other measures to bring about compliance on the part of procuring entities can take place within the context of the legal requirements and under the direction of the regulatory body.

The procurement reform process in Uganda has gone through the following stages:

### **Recognition of Need for Reform**

By the late 1990s the failure of the existing procurement system to cope with the expansion in government procurement requirements and to deliver value for money had become generally accepted among government and donor partners. In December 1997, a National Public Procurement Forum was held to bring together key decision makers to discuss procurement reform. Following the Forum, the Minister of Finance established a Task Force on Public Procurement Reform, which commenced operations in May 1998.

### **Study of Possible Procurement Models and Identification of Blueprint for Reform**

The Report of the Task Force was published in January 1999. Among its principal recommendations was the replacement of the Public Finance (Tender Board) Regulations 1977 by a legal framework that would decentralise responsibility to each procuring entity while defining the procurement procedures to be followed, giving preference to competitive methods. The World Bank supported these local reform initiatives by undertaking a comprehensive study of the development needs of the procurement system in a Country Procurement Assessment Report, which was published in 2001 and revised in 2004.

### **Enactment of Procurement Law**

The Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act passed into law in 2003. The Act requires all public procurement and disposal to be conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, accountability and fairness and in a manner that maximizes competition and achieves value for money. The law provides for delineation of roles and separation of powers between

- User departments, which initiate the procurement process and evaluate bids;
- Procurement and Disposal Units, comprising procurement professionals who manage the procurement process;
- Contracts Committees, which approve each stage of the procurement or disposal process and decide on the best evaluated bidder and contract award; and
- The Accounting Officer, a senior official in the ministry or agency who is responsible for ensuring the proper functioning of the system.

The law sets out detailed procedural rules, whose provisions include the advertising and public display of bid opportunities, notices of best evaluated bidder and contract award. The required procedures are supported by an enforcement system that allows dissatisfied suppliers to seek administrative review and provides for suspension of providers for offences and disciplinary measures to be taken against public officers who commit malpractices.

#### **Establishment of Regulatory Institution**

The law established an autonomous regulatory body, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA). The work of the PPDA is carried out under the direction of a Board of Directors by a Corporate Office headed by the Executive Director and by four departments that are responsible respectively for

- Training and capacity building;
- Legal matters and compliance assessment;
- Procurement audits and the investigation of complaints; and
- Finance, administration, human resources and information technology.

#### **Publication of Regulations, Guidelines and Standard Bidding Documentation**

The law is complemented by Regulations, Guidelines, Forms, Codes of Conduct and Standard Bidding Documentation. These serve to assist the procuring and disposing entities and providers of



services, goods and works to carry out procurement and disposal processes according to the law and good practice.

### **Capacity Building**

One department of the PPDA is dedicated to capacity building, by developing training modules, by conducting training programmes directly or through other agencies and by promoting professional development. Modules have been prepared on various aspects of the law and good practice and most procurement practitioners and some other stakeholders, including suppliers, have been made familiar with the procedures to be followed and the purposes they serve. To address the need for greater professionalism, higher education institutions have been encouraged to develop programmes in purchasing and legal and other measures have been prepared to establish a national professional body that would control entry to the purchasing profession and regulate the conduct of its members.

### **Compliance Assessment, Procurement Audits and the Hearing of Appeals**

Once the legal and institutional framework is in place and practitioners have been made familiar with the requirements through guidance and training, the process of monitoring compliance and taking action against malpractices can begin. The first step has been to assess whether procuring and disposing entities have put in place the required structure of Contracts Committees and Procurement and Disposal Units and whether these bodies are carrying out their functions in accordance with the law. The process of auditing a sample of procurement contracts made by each entity has begun. Suppliers have a statutory right to seek administrative review, initially from the Accounting Officer of the entity concerned and thereafter from the PPDA, when they consider that an award of contract has been made unfairly. The number of such appeals increases once suppliers find that they provide a useful means of redress.

#### **THE PRESENT POSITION IN UGANDA: HOW FAR HAVE THE OUTCOMES BEEN ACHIEVED?**

When measured against the outcomes envisaged by the 1998-99 Task Force and the criteria set out by the World Bank and by the OECD, the procurement reforms in Uganda have been partially

successful, though important gaps remain. The first two of the OECD pillars, providing for a legislative and regulatory framework and an institutional framework and management capacity, are largely in place at the central government level and are being extended to the local government procurement system. The model that has been adopted, providing for decentralised procurement practice supported by central regulation, can provide operational flexibility within a national standard of good practice. Tanzania and Kenya have recently enacted procurement and disposal laws that are on similar lines to the PPDA Act. The efficacy of the regulatory system in Uganda has been attested by the World Bank, whose Programme Document for the Fifth Poverty Reduction Support Credit notes that Uganda has become one of the most advanced countries in the region in terms of implementing procurement reforms so that, at the central government level, all the ingredients for making the procurement system more efficient, economic, transparent and accountable are now in place (International Development Association, 2005, p. 15). The redesign of the Authority's website [www.ppda.go.ug](http://www.ppda.go.ug) in 2005 with much fuller information on procurement requirements and activities, including the findings of procurement audits, has greatly improved transparency.

There are, however, serious shortcomings in the reform process in Uganda to date, particularly in the area of the last two pillars, concerning procurement operations and market practices and the integrity of the system. The following are some of the main issues of concern.

### **Harmonisation of Local Government Procurement with the National Standard**

Some 34% of government expenditure takes place at the local government level, yet the process of extending the reforms to the local government procurement system has not yet been fully achieved. Procurement decisions have been determined largely by local politicians sitting on Tender Boards. A National Integrity Survey that was carried out in 2002 by consultants commissioned by the Inspector General of Government found that Local Government Tender Boards were perceived to be the second most corrupt institution in Uganda, exceeded only by the Police (Office of the Inspector General of Government, 2003). Legislation to harmonise

local governments' procurement with the national system was enacted in 2005 and the process of implementing the reforms in local governments is presently under way.

### **Compliance with Prescribed Practices**

Many central government ministries and agencies are not following prescribed practices. The procurement audits carried out by the PPDA have revealed that out of 322 contracts audited as at end 2005, only 7 (2%) were assessed as being clean, i.e., carried out in accordance with the law and with internal structures observed. Among the key weaknesses identified were inadequate procurement planning, leading to an excessive use of direct procurements and failure to align procurement with the budgetary process; poor record-keeping, leading to many procurement documents being untraceable (or procurements having taken place without documentation); and abuse of process, for example, contracts having been awarded to a company other than the best evaluated bidder, retrospective approvals for contracts, inconsistencies in tender evaluation and interference in the contract award process by unauthorised parties.

### **Enforcement**

There is need for enforcement measures to be clarified and carried out more rigorously. The PPDA is empowered to recommend action when malpractices are discovered but has sometimes failed to follow up thoroughly to ensure that the recommended changes are implemented.

### **Capacity Building**

Capacity building and the development of professionalism in purchasing is a long-term process and consequently improvements in professional practice will only be gradual. The establishment of a national professional body with effective control over the conduct of practitioners will take some time to achieve. Meantime, the shortage of proficient practitioners and weak professional regulation will remain.

### **Use of E-Procurement**

Greater use of electronic procurement, which was one of the desired outcomes set by the 1998-99 Task Force, has not advanced

to the stage reached by more developed countries. The main achievement to date has been the improved PPDA website, though the Authority has still to persuade most entities to place on the website their bid opportunities, notices of best evaluated bidder and contract award and other statutory information. More advanced applications of electronic commerce, including its use in tendering, may not be suitable until substantial improvements in basic infrastructure have come about. In Uganda, as in many other African countries, supply of electricity is spasmodic and Internet services are slower and subject to more frequent breakdowns than would occur in developed countries. However, a study will be undertaken into possible applications of electronic procurement.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms**

There are inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, in particular a lack of comprehensive statistics on the value of goods and services procured and on the procurement process.

### **Resource Constraints**

Despite the generous support of its donor partners from the international community, the PPDA has been under-resourced and unable to provide the degree of momentum to the reform process that would be desirable.

### **Corruption**

Most seriously, there is no evidence that the reforms carried out so far have been successful in reducing the incidence of corruption in public procurement in Uganda. The annual surveys by Transparency International have shown that Uganda is one of the most corrupt countries in the world and that little progress has been made in reducing it. An integrity survey that focuses specifically on public procurement is being undertaken during 2006. This survey will provide evidence of the extent of perceived corruption in procurement and the areas and stages of the procurement process where it is most prevalent. Future surveys on similar lines may indicate whether the procurement reforms together with the planned tightening of anti-corruption legislation are having a beneficial impact on the rate of prevalence. There is no evidence that Uganda has been made a more attractive place for local and international companies to do

business. Companies continue to complain about the deterrents to business holding back the development agenda in African countries, namely that governments are slow payers, difficult to work with or have their own favoured suppliers for contract award, and where corruption plays a part in decisions.

### **Ability to Manage High-Value Projects**

A key test of the prevalence of corruption in public procurement is whether the system is able to manage high-value projects, where there are huge potential profits and consequently much greater scope for bribery. In Hong Kong, where corruption has been effectively controlled, large-scale projects have been managed effectively. The new airport at Chek Lap Kok that was completed in 1998 was one of the world's largest infrastructure projects, involving expenditure of US\$20 billion on land reclamation, a major highway and rail network and construction of the world's longest combined rail and road suspension bridge (1,377 metres). In a review of the project, a mission of Transparency International found that the vast project had been implemented largely within budget and with minimal corruption (Rooke & Wiehen, 1999). The main factors in the success of the project were

- Strict anti-corruption laws and strong enforcement;
- Clear rules for procurement of services and supplies; monitoring of contract performance; enforcement of accountability; and dispute resolution; and
- A favourable working environment, including good salary levels, strong professionalism and high morale.

By contrast, there have been several cases in Uganda where large projects have collapsed on account of failures in the procurement system. The US\$550 million Bujagali Dam hydro-electric project collapsed in 2002 when the World Bank suspended funding after a former energy minister admitted to having accepted a US\$10,000 bribe from a construction company that had been awarded the contract without going through a fully-competitive bidding process (Prayas Energy Group, 2002). In 2006 the evaluation of tenders for supply of a national identity card system was halted when the Inspector General of Government intervened to investigate corruption allegations.

The main obstacles to the success of procurement reforms have been identified as

- Deeply vested interests and lack of political will;
- Paucity of technical knowledge and capacity; and
- The complexity of the substantive issues involved, in particular in respect of the type of legal instruments to be used, the means of providing the regulatory body with adequate authority and independence for taking firm and consistent measures to enforce the prevailing rules (Hunja, 2003, pp. 17-21).

All of these obstacles are present in Uganda. Despite the government's declaration of a zero tolerance policy, there are several high profile cases related to procurement where influential people who have been criticized in Commissions of Enquiry remain unpunished. A recent case involving misappropriation of money from the Global Fund, which led to the suspension of the Fund's assistance to Uganda, has shown that the seriousness of the problem persists.

#### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

In 2004, the PPDA prepared a 3-year Corporate Plan, which is revised annually. The purposes of the Corporate Plan are

- To provide the principal statement of PPDA programmes and the purposes they serve,
- To present this information to donor partners, government ministries and other stakeholders,
- To guide the mobilisation of resources,
- To present each department's activities within the context of the PPDA's strategic goals, and
- To facilitate medium-term planning.

Implementation of the Plan will help to put in place the remaining two pillars for establishing a well-functioning public procurement system as defined by the OECD/World Bank. In particular, the focus will be on building capacity, raising the extent of compliance with the law, reducing corruption opportunities in procurement and disposal, bringing local governments' procurement and disposal systems up to

national and international standards and best practices and establishing an effective system for benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation.

### **OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

What can Uganda's experience contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the strategy for procurement reform? African countries share a heritage of colonialism (though under different colonial masters) and in many countries it is the colonial procurement system that is the subject of reform. However, these countries are diverse in respect of their economic and social features and their procurement needs and there is no standard model of reform that would be suitable for all. Some critics argue that pressures to adopt western "best practices" for government contracting constitute an attempt to remake the developing world in the image of the West and to reinforce the hegemony of the USA and other advanced capitalist democracies; instead, procurement reforms should reflect a range of models from developed and developing countries (Schwartz, 2003, p. 36).

Uganda's experience of a centralised procurement system being unable to cope with the demands of a developing economy is shared by several other African countries, including the neighbouring countries of Tanzania and Kenya, both of which have adopted a similar model of decentralised practice subject to central regulation. While some countries maintain successful procurement systems through administrative instructions to civil servants, supported by a few general references to procurement in the Public Finance Regulations, the problems of enforcement and the temptations of malpractice in developing African countries are greater and consequently a comprehensive public procurement law is an essential requirement to reinforce government policy. Even with a procurement law in place, supported by regulations, guidelines and standard bidding documentation, enforcing compliance will continue to be a formidable challenge.

There are advantages in setting up an institutional framework that addresses the issues of capacity, monitoring and enforcement, as well as the developmental needs of the system. Whether this requires a dedicated institution, such as the PPDA, is a matter of controversy. There are many in the Ugandan civil service who believe

that the creation of the PPDA was unnecessary and that the work could have been done as effectively through existing civil service structures. On the other hand, it is desirable that there should be effective coordination between the various strands of the procurement reform programme and this may be easier to bring about when these strands form part of a dedicated institution. However, the creation of such a dedicated institution must not become a barrier to effective coordination with the rest of the public service, in particular with those institutions that promote accountability and the fight against corruption. There is need also for the procurement regulator to gain acceptance by the various ministries and local government authorities that carry out procurement and this is more easily achieved when the regulator and his/her staff have sufficient expertise and experience to be able to advise on the means of overcoming the practical problems that arise during the procurement process without compromising the requirements of the law and best practice.

There are persuasive arguments that procurement reform is likely to produce the most beneficial outcomes when it is approached as an integral part of a broader programme of reform, including developing the rule of law, improving the investment climate, reducing corruption, implementing e-government, enhancing service delivery and improving public financial management (Development Assistance Committee, 2005). Integration of procurement reforms with complementary efforts to improve other aspects of financial management, so that procurement is made a mainstream part of the public financial management system, are seen as crucial to overall success.

A key requirement is to establish an effective system of monitoring and evaluation that is based on reliable and comprehensive statistical data covering the value and type of procurements transacted and the procurement process itself. Such data, together with the findings of procurement audits and special investigations in response to complaints and other information, provide an important means of detecting anomalies and malpractices which demonstrate that transparency and integrity have been compromised. The monitoring and evaluation system should also determine the risks and vulnerable points at each stage of the procurement process. Efforts at remedying malpractices have tended



to focus on the bidding process but at the OECD Expert Meeting on Integrity in Public Procurement in June 2005, it was considered that the phases of definition of needs and contract management were at higher risk (Burton, 2005, p. 24).

Once malpractices have been identified, they must be corrected and mechanisms put in place to prevent recurrence. Some problems may be attributable to inadequate knowledge and skill or to lack of essential equipment, for example, a procuring entity may be unable to meet a requirement to place notices of bid opportunities on the regulator's website because it lacks computers with Internet connections. Corrective measures may consist of capacity building in the broadest sense, to include provision of essential equipment as well as training and professional development. Where regulations have been deliberately flouted, sanctions must be applied rigorously; otherwise there is serious danger that the law will become a dead letter, bearing little relationship to actual practice.

Hunja and other experienced observers of procurement reforms in different countries have stressed the importance of consistent political commitment and support from the highest levels of government. Political leadership is needed not only in support of the passage of legislation through Parliament but in demonstrating that all the forces of government will be used to make the procurement reforms a success and to punish those who commit malpractices. If senior figures in government who commit procurement-related malpractices continue to hold office without application of sanction, then the government's declarations about zero tolerance of corruption will not be accepted. Corruption and malpractices in procurement are facilitated by the general expectation among all participants and among the public at large that this kind of behaviour is the norm and consequently that bribery is a necessary means to obtain government contracts. Leading by example and educating the public about the true costs of corruption can be a powerful means of changing such expectations and of building resistance to corrupt practices.

Finally, procurement regulators and other anti-corruption agencies need to develop partnerships with civic organisations. Such organisations can be powerful weapons both in exposing corruption in procurement and in educating the public about the social cost. When the public at large realise that they are the victims of corruption, as

they suffer the consequences of poorly-constructed schools, roads and other projects, and fewer resources being available for social programmes, public support for fighting corruption will be enhanced.

### CONCLUSION

Procurement reform is a protracted process and there are many obstacles along the way. Establishing the legal framework and the regulatory institution are the first and possibly the easiest steps in the reform process. Enforcing compliance with the law and eradicating institutionalised corruption from public procurement are the more difficult steps that may take longer to achieve. However, while acknowledging the shortcomings, we should also recognise the progress that has been made in Uganda and in many other African countries, where public procurement is conducted according to higher standards of integrity, transparency and value for money than those which obtained in the past.

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