

Nigeria: Citizen Monitors Prevent Corruption and Ensure Procurement Accountability in Energy Sector

Synopsis

The World Bank has been working with the Nigerian government and local civil society to rein in corruption by supporting the training of citizen monitors to ensure accountability and effectiveness in energy sector investments.

Challenge

After years of scandal, Nigeria has struggled to restore public trust in the government and rid the public sector of persistent corruption. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the government procurement process, where vast sums of money – approximately 70 percent of government activity – exchange hands behind seemingly closed doors. Complicating matters, public service contracting is often highly technical, making it arcane and difficult for the average citizen to take advantage of recent laws allowing civil society organizations to observe all stages of the procurement process. As a result, citizens are often unable to provide the civic feedback necessary to ensure effective governance.

Approach

In order to strengthen the feedback between citizens and the government, the World Bank is partnering with the Nigerian civil society organization the Public and Private Development Center and the Bureau of Public Procurement to train and certify citizen monitors. These monitors are being trained in the intricacies of Nigeria's Freedom of Information law so that they can clearly monitor public works projects that were previously hidden from view.

In addition, the project is building on an online reporting platform a tool that facilitates real-time analysis of public procurement trends. The platform not only allows officials to identify and rectify reported circumstances that may lead to large scale graft and mismanagement, but it also provides civil society organizations and the media a platform for engaging in evidence-based advocacy efforts.

Beneficiary Results

The project is making important strides in creating a culture of citizen activism through promoting accountability in government procurement. Results include:

Over 120 citizen monitors trained by the project are now actively tracking public works across the country. The website – www.procurementmonitor.org – is online, fully functioning, and serves as an important educational tool for citizens interested in accessing reports and guidelines.

Citizen monitors have generated and submitted 135 reports through the online portal.

The project has successfully fostered a strong working relationship between CSOs and government enforcement agencies aimed at eliminating corruption. Citizen monitors file reports, while the Bureau of Public Procurement ensures that appropriate follow up action is taken.

Bank Contribution

The World Bank provided technical assistance on contract monitoring to both CSOs and government officials by drawing on lessons learned from procurement systems around the world.

Partners

The World Bank's approach has focused on building linkages and partnerships with key civil society members and government. Within the government, the project has worked primarily with the Bureau of Public Procurement, the regulatory agency for government procurement. The project has also established a voluntary coalition of Nigerian civil society organizations that is led by the Nigerian Public and Private Development Center. Other members of the coalition include representatives from the extractive industries and members of the media.

Moving Forward

As the Nigeria procurement monitoring project moves forward, public education remains a challenge. Not only is there a need for more citizens to serve as monitors, but it is also necessary to raise awareness among the public about the importance of government contracting.

"People need to understand that in order to get good water out of their pipes, they need a good contracting process and a good contractor," says Marcela Rozo, Senior Operations Officer at the World Bank.

The World Bank is building upon the partnerships launched under these efforts by supporting a project to expand electricity in Abuja and Lagos. The World Bank is relying on the same consortium of civil society organizations to monitor implementation plans, terms of reference, and needs assessments.