

# Call for Proposals: Research Consultancy Open Contracting and civic action and accountability

Type:	Home-based, might include travel, individual or team of consultants
Duration:	15-30 days between April and August 2019
Scope of work:	Desk research, interviews and field work as needed, analysis and reporting (2 drafts), summary blog post
Delivery:	25 August 2019
Submissions due:	22 March 2019

## About Hivos

Hivos is an international organization that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. Our primary focus is achieving structural change through cooperation with innovative businesses, citizens and their organizations. We share a dream with them of sustainable economies and inclusive societies.

## Background

Open up contracting is a process in which governments (supply side) work together with a variety of stakeholders, including civil society, journalists and the private sector, to make public procurement processes to deliver better public goods and services, save money and create a level playing field with fair competition for the private sector.

Open contracting has been adopted - in practice or as a commitment - by dozens of countries, subnational and city governments worldwide and received significant attention from advocates and researchers alike. But the evidence of the concrete benefits that open contracting offers to stakeholders directly involved in government procurement processes largely derives from a small group of countries.

As with other open government reforms, initial commitments to open contracting tend to focus on the technical implementation on online procurement systems and the availability of structured data, like the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS). While the availability of quality structured data is a key precondition for effective, transparent and accountable public service delivery, it is just a means but not an end.

Transparency and the availability of data does not lead to accountability automatically. Data needs to be used and stakeholders need to take action (e.g. analysis, evidence, advocacy, citizen engagement, investigations, scrutiny, etc.) to ensure there is a accountability

reaction/results<sup>1</sup> (increase of public consultations leading to better planning, increase public oversight to reduce corruption, etc).

There remains a need for more robust evidence on cases where open contracting reforms/initiatives have actually translated into increased use of data, and where use was followed up by action and reaction leading to results and benefits (e.g. increase access to quality public services delivery, increase value for money, increase efficiency of procurement processes, decrease corruption, increase fair competition and a level playing field, etc.).

This research aims to address this gap through analysis of cases in which open contracting was adopted. It identifies and assesses the ways in which key aspects of open contracting reforms/initiatives did or did not lead to circumstances under which open contracting may flourish.

## Research Objectives

1) Develop insights and an understanding of the factors and circumstances of cases where open contracting has been implemented.

- For **Government** actors, we seek to understand how open contracting:
  - increases quality of public service delivery,
  - reduces corruption risks, etc.
  - increases competition for tenders,
- For **Civil Society** actors (including citizens, CSO and media), we seek to understand how open contracting:
  - increases inclusion and equal access to public services.
  - increases public consultations in the planning phase,
  - supports citizen monitoring of public service delivery,
  - increases the availability and use of data for analysis and advocacy,
- For **Public Oversight** actors, we seek to understand how open contracting:
  - increases ability to use analytics like red flags,
  - increases the use of feedback loops and acts upon feedback received,
  - increases successful investigations in cases of fraud and corruption.

2) Produce useful research outputs documenting benefits associated with open contracting which are useful for engagement, advocacy, oversight and process design by government officials, actors in civil society and media and oversight authorities.

3) Gather insights regarding the specific contextual and programmatic factors that may contribute to specific impacts and are expected to directly inform the design of open

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<sup>1</sup> See the data value chain in [Mapping open data for accountability](#), by Transparency and Accountability Initiative and Open Data Charter, 2016.

contracting and procurement projects, government processes, civic engagement, scrutiny and oversight.

## Research Questions and Summary

This research is based on three broad research questions, which target the three primary types of stakeholders that are directly involved in open contracting and government procurement processes.

- RQ 1: How can open contracting reforms and increased availability of data be used to realize tangible results and benefits (e.g. increase access to quality public services delivery, increase value for money, increase efficiency of procurement processes, decrease corruption, increase fair competition and a level playing field, etc.) for actors in government, civil society (including citizens, CSO and media) and oversight authorities?
- RQ 2: What contextual and programmatic aspects of open contracting contribute to achieving the concrete results and benefits described in RQ1, and how?
- RQ 3: What do stakeholders directly involved in, or impacted by, the implementation of open contracting processes experience as the most significant impediments to effective implementation, and how do such impediments impact the concrete benefits described above?

These questions will be pursued using multi-method within-case analysis in selected cases. The methodology will be agreed on together with the selection of cases during the the inception phase of the research consultancy (i.e. in the first month).

The research will conclude with comparative analysis across the case studies, and consideration of whether any findings may be generalized to other contexts. To the extent feasible, the project will also adapt and release research materials for application and re-use in other countries and by other researchers.

## Outputs

The consultant shall deliver multiple outputs, varying from reports to communications:

### 4.1 Midterm report

Consultant should deliver a midterm (halfway) report to the project steering committee after collecting sufficient qualitative and quantitative data in a single case to support consideration of adjustments to the methodology. Timing for the report will be agreed with the project focal point ahead of time. Midterm report should be short and text based, and should include the following:

- General description of progress to date

- Description of key challenges in data collection - qualitative and quantitative thus far, and any potential challenges that data availability will pose to analysis
- Prediction on how those challenges might manifest in other cases
- Proposed adjustments to methods in order to meet those challenges

#### **4.2 Data collection and data mapping management (as needed)**

The consultant might collect and clean necessary public procurement data sets as needed. Consultant should further map additional data sources collectible at a low cost such as key informant interviews, online journals, or relevant national surveys of companies. Consultant might carry out fieldwork to explore the initial findings from quantitative analysis. This fieldwork and associated desk research should be conducted through the rigorous application of an appropriate methodology.

#### **4.3 Case Study Reports**

A narrative document should be produced for each case study, including:

- **Detailed mapping** of the key transparency intervention to be evaluated (e.g. adoption of a policy on open data publication). An accompanying narrative should define the precise legal and technical content of the actual implemented reform, as well as the context in which it occurred. This narrative should include a particular focus on implementation timing and scope (e.g. from 1st of January in Year X, central bodies have to use the new data structure and procurement system), as well as the legal/policy changes that could impact procurement performance, including possible confounding variables (e.g. changes to complaint procedures, data collection processes, etc, to be defined in the inception phase of the research), and the extent to which these reforms have been implemented.
- **Before-after analysis** highlighting the concrete change in data use, actions and accountability response by actors (governments, civil society, oversight authorities) and analysis of the intervention and the dependent variables (to be defined in the inception phase of the research). This analysis should be conducted according to an agreed methodology and should present reasonable and thorough arguments about how various contextual and programmatic factors contributed to various outcomes. Note that this analysis should employ the dependent and independent variables. An overview of operationalized indicators will also be developed. To the extent possible, the same indicators should be used for each country to facilitate cross-country comparison.
- **Short executive summaries** should be provided for each of the three research questions for each case study, distinguishing between benefits to each of the key stakeholder groups (governments, civil society, oversight authorities).

#### **4.4 Synthesis report**

A separate narrative analysis of comparability and external validity of the findings will accompany the final case study reports. This should discuss limitations and opportunities for comparative insights, and also the degree to which any insights or methods might be

generalized to other country contexts. This analysis should also consider the feasibility of adapting and releasing research materials (survey instruments, methods descriptions, data collection and management tools) for use by other researchers in other contexts.

#### **4.5 Open Research Materials**

To the extent deemed feasible in comparative analysis, the consultant will agree with the steering committee on which research materials are appropriate for adaptation and open release, and prepare them for release under creative commons license.

#### **4.6 Communications**

During and following research, the consultant will author text for one blog post per case study and one for the synthesis report (1,000-3,000 words) describing research processes and findings. Blog texts will be authored for consumption by a non-research audience within the open contracting advocacy community.

### **Workflow and Timeline**

Month	Activity / Deliverable
1	Inception, approval of methods and work plan
2-4	Quantitative and qualitative data collection, interviews and analysis (incl field work as needed)
2	Midterm report and methodology review
5	Draft case studies and synthesis report
6	Final case studies and synthesis report and open research materials

### **Qualifications**

1. The consultant may be an individual or team of individuals.
2. Demonstrated experience conducting comparable quantitative and qualitative research on governance-related processes in a developing country context.
3. Demonstrated expertise in conducting rigorous research and appropriate methodological experience.
4. Ability to articulate and justify a detailed methodological approach, including the specification of both quantitative and qualitative methods, any analytical risks and caveats associated with their application in the current context, and the rationale for their combination.
5. Demonstrated strong writing skills in English, and demonstrated ability to adapt writing style to diverse audiences.

## Responding to the call

Interested candidates should send an email before the 22nd March 2019 to Michelle van Raalte [mraalte@hivos.org](mailto:mraalte@hivos.org), including the following:

- Cover letter, including description of experience with comparable projects and proposed approach to general project implementation.
- CVs of all relevant researchers, and descriptions of research partners or contributing institutions or projects, as appropriate.
- 2-3 pages describing the proposed methodology and mix of methods, including references and notes on potential for comparative analysis.

The issuance of this Request for proposals does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Hivos.