



ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFICIENT PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS TO PREVENT CORRUPTION

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ cannot be realized without transparent, accountable, and inclusive public institutions, as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires capable institutions to design sound policies, equitably deliver quality public services, and uphold the rule of law. While SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions explicitly addresses anti-corruption, the success of the entire 2030 Agenda depends on effectively preventing and combating corruption across all sectors. To prevent corruption and deliver public value to citizens, governments must be guided by a strong commitment to integrity, transparency, and independent oversight, as underscored by the Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development.²

As a cross-cutting issue, corruption has a direct impact on all dimensions of sustainable development - economic, environmental, and social. Corruption results in loss of resources, weakens economic growth, deteriorates the quality of public services, raises inequality and erodes trust in public institutions. It negatively impacts peace and stability, the rule of law and security, democracy and human rights, gender equality, the environment and the provision of essential services. Corruption weakens democracy, including by distorting elections, capturing policy making for private gain and diverting funds from public services. The consequences of corruption bear heavily on people living in poverty, marginalized and vulnerable people, compromising the principle of Leaving No One Behind. As noted by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, corruption is the ultimate betrayal of public trust.³

One of the government activities most vulnerable to corruption is public procurement, the process by which

Key Messages

- » Public procurement is at heightened risk for corruption in emergency situations. While special measures are warranted in emergencies, governments need to be aware of the risks associated with diverging from regular procurement practices.
- » Emergency procurement procedures should enable rapid, orderly, and transparent procurement processes in crises, supported by regular drills and stress-testing to ensure readiness, value for money, and integrity safeguards.
- » Governments need to adopt pre-established emergency procurement frameworks. This ensures that when emergencies occur, procedures are activated automatically without sacrificing proper oversight or internal controls.
- » Transparency and accountability must be upheld in times of crisis. Real-time publication of contracts, suppliers, and delivery status on public dashboards, linked to civil society and audit institutions, including Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), can help detect red flags early and sustain public trust.
- » Every emergency procurement cycle should conclude with a formal post-implementation review. Institutionalizing learning ensures continuous improvement rather than reactive responses.
- » Resilient and ethical public procurement requires moving beyond rules and skills, by integrating behavioural insights, integrity-based organizational cultures, and peer-to-peer learning to strengthen decision-making, especially under crisis conditions.

governments purchase goods, services and work from the private sector. Public procurement spending averages between 13 per cent and 20 per cent of gross domestic product worldwide.⁴ In addition to the sheer volume of transactions, corruption risks are aggravated by the complexity of the procurement process, the close interaction between public officials and businesses, and the large number of stakeholders involved.⁵ It is estimated that

¹ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

² The Principles of Effective Governance developed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2018, <https://publicadministration.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa/principles-effective-governance-sustainable-development>.

³ <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/statement-corruption-context-covid-19>.

⁴ World Bank: Global Public Procurement Database (2020) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2020/03/23/global-public-procurement-database-share-compare-improve>.

⁵ OECD: Preventing Corruption in Public Procurement (2016) https://baselgovernance.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/oecd_preventing_corruption_in_public_procurement_2016.pdf.

money drained through corruption amounts to between 20 and 25 per cent of the procurement budgets worldwide, around US\$2 trillion annually.⁶ This contravenes the governments' obligation to use taxpayers' money to transparently purchase goods, services and works from bidders that offer the best value for money and meet the requirements, including safety.

Public procurement is especially vulnerable to corruption in emergency situations such as natural disasters and health pandemics. Governments face challenges of delivering goods and services in huge quantities rapidly, often in difficult conditions, while ensuring that procurement processes are conducted in a transparent and accountable manner. Yet many of the safeguards of corruption control require time, and multiple checks.⁷

This Policy Brief analyses the heightened risk for corruption in public procurement in emergency situations and how to promote a balance between efficiency and accountability; examines legal and institutional frameworks that enable transparent and efficient procurement during crises; and explores the role of behavioural insights in strengthening procurement systems, as well as highlights innovative digital and e-procurement approaches.

The Policy Brief builds on UN DESA's work on public procurement, which includes a Training of Trainers toolkit module on Transparent Public Procurement, part of the Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals,⁸ and an online training course on Transparent Public Procurement.⁹

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT – RISKS FOR CORRUPTION

Public procurement processes consist of planning, tendering, and post-award stages. While corruption can occur at any stage, most anti-corruption interventions focus on the tendering phase, which includes management of the call for tenders, receipt and evaluation of bids and contract negotiation and award. There are several types¹⁰ of corruption that can afflict public procurement, including bribery and kickbacks, bid rigging,

embezzlement, fraud, extortion, patronage, nepotism, collusion and conflict of interest.

Some areas of public procurement are at a particularly high risk of corruption, such as urgent purchases linked to emergency responses. For example, procurement processes linked to natural disasters and health emergencies are at heightened risk of corruption due to the need to deliver quickly, the scale of resources involved, inadequate supply, political considerations, and in some cases the concentration of power at the executive level. These can lead to fast-track procedures, unprecedented government spending and rule by decrees and executive orders with limited parliamentary oversight and present opportunities for corrupt practices such as bribery, embezzlement and manipulation of procurement processes.¹¹

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has noted that anti-corruption measures are “largely absent from emergency frameworks, limiting opportunities for oversight and accountability concerning how such funds are used and whether they have a measurable impact on crisis response and recovery”.¹² It is crucial that anti-corruption measures are streamlined in all emergency-related procurement processes as governments must remain accountable for how tax-payer resources are spent under all circumstances. However, the imperative to preserve human life and health calls for public procurement rules and procedures that enable fast and efficient delivery of life-saving equipment and services.

Besides the concern of draining public funds, corruption in public procurement has several other detrimental consequences that hinder the achievement of the SDGs.¹³ It often increases the cost, lowers the quality of goods or services, and reduces the likelihood that the goods or services purchased will meet people's needs. It can put people at risk, for example through substandard medication and equipment. It also slows down economic development and has adverse environmental impacts, including through illegal use of natural resources. Finally, it erodes public trust in government.¹⁴

⁶ OECD: Implementing the OECD Principles for Integrity in Public Procurement (2013) as referenced in Transparency International (2013): Curbing Corruption in Public Procurement – A Practical Guide https://files.transparencycdn.org/images/2014_AntiCorruption_PublicProcurement_Guide_EN.pdf.

⁷ Fazekas, M., Nischchal S., Soreide T.: The Impact of Emergencies on Corruption Risks: Italian Natural Disasters and Public Procurement in Regulation & Governance, Vol. 19, Issue 4 (October 2025) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rego.12653>.

⁸ UN DESA: Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals (2021) <https://unpan.un.org/capacity-development/curriculum-on-governance-for-the-SDGs/2>, specifically Module 13 on Transparent Public Procurement.

⁹ UN DESA: Transparent Public Procurement online training course (2025) <https://capacity.desa.un.org/article/transparent-public-procurement>.

¹⁰ Heggstad, K. K. & Frøystad, M.: The basics of integrity in procurement. U4 Issue No. 10. U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre (October 2011) <https://www.u4.no/publications/the-basics-of-integrity-in-procurement.pdf>.

¹¹ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): COVID-19 Fiscal Response and the Prevention of Corruption https://www.unodc.org/pdf/corruption/COVID-19fiscal_response.pdf.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its Target 12.7 calls for promoting public procurement practices that are sustainable in accordance with national policies and priorities. The UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) notes in its Contribution to the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that the “huge potential of sustainable public procurement is still underutilized. By leveraging the purchasing power of public administration to guide products and services towards sustainability, Governments can lead by example and stimulate the markets for sustainable products” <https://docs.un.org/en/E/2021/44>.

¹⁴ Deyong, M., Ferguson, G., Halma, E. & Bildfell, C.: Corruption and Public Procurement. In Ferguson, G. (Ed.). Global corruption: Law, theory & practice, Ch. 11 (2018). University of Victoria (Canada). <https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/4b94001c-24d3-4a80-91c4-17bfd9a62849/content>.

STRENGTHENING EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN PROCUREMENT IN EMERGENCIES – INSIGHTS FROM UNCAC AND PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

Article 9 of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)¹⁵ not only calls for taking “the necessary steps to establish appropriate systems of procurement, based on transparency, competition and objective criteria in decision-making, that are effective, inter alia, in preventing corruption”¹⁶ but also lays out specific measures to be taken by governments to prevent corruption at different procurement stages. These include, for example, public distribution of information relating to procurement procedures and contracts, establishment of conditions for participation, use of objective and predetermined criteria for public procurement decisions, and measures to regulate matters regarding procurement personnel.

Box 1

Disasters and increased risk of corruption in procurement

According to a 2025 study, disasters increase the risk of corruption in the medium-term (3+ years after a disaster) even more than in the short-term (1 year after a disaster). Comparing the short-term and mid-term impacts, there is a consistent increase in corruption risks after a disaster, rather than a drop after the situation recedes. For example, the use of non-open procurement procedures increases, on average, by 6 percentage points during the first year after a disaster, compared to 10 percentage points after 3 years. The persistence, and even increase, of corruption risks after a disaster may result from a shift from a low-corruption balance to a high-corruption balance, driven by changes in social norms and power dynamics. A disaster can act as a temporary shock with a lasting impact on corruption risks. This is in line with the concept of corruption as a self-reinforcing process of “corruption corrupts”.

Source: Fazekas, M., Nischchal S., Soreide T.: *The Impact of Emergencies on Corruption Risks: Italian Natural Disasters and Public Procurement in Regulation & Governance*, Vol. 19, Issue 4 (October 2025) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rego.12653>.

Commonly used strategies to advance the Principle of Integrity,¹⁷ part of the Principles of Effective Governance, include the promotion of anti-corruption policies, practices and bodies, codes of conduct for public officials, competitive public procurement, elimination of bribery and trading in influence, conflict of interest policies, whistle-blower protection and provision

of adequate remuneration and equitable pay scales for public servants. These strategies, along with the strategies to promote transparency (proactive disclosure of information, budget transparency, open government data, registries of beneficial ownership and lobby registries), can help governments prevent corruption in public procurement.¹⁸

COVID-19 – PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AT THE FRONTLINE

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world had to urgently procure immense quantities of critical healthcare-related equipment and supplies, such as ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, COVID tests, and eventually vaccines, in a race against time to save lives. Public procurement strategies for medical supplies and equipment “emerged at the forefront of governmental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic”.¹⁹

Several countries introduced new legislation or invoked existing frameworks to enable faster procurement of medical supplies to meet the urgent needs that arose during the pandemic. Some European Union (EU) countries invoked the 2014 EU Directives that allow for negotiated procurement processes without prior publication or call for competition in situations of extreme urgency. The European Commission also took measures to facilitate the procurement of essential health-care supplies, including through a voluntary coordinated procurement mechanism.²⁰ This enabled fast acquisition of medical devices and PPE, with delivery time as a key factor of the procurement evaluation criteria. Portugal and Italy introduced legislative measures allowing authorities to conduct urgent COVID-related purchases without adhering to standard procurement procedures.²¹ In France, emergency procedures reduced the advertising deadlines for public buyers from 35 to 15 days.²² Some governments contracted directly with large producers, circumventing standard competitive processes.

While special measures are warranted in emergencies, governments need to be aware of the risks associated with diverging from regular procurement practices, including possible higher cost, vulnerability to fraud,

¹⁵ UNCAC is legally binding for all countries that have ratified it. It was ratified by 191 UN Member States as of August 2024 <https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/uncac/learn-about-uncac.html>.

¹⁶ Article 9.1 of UNCAC https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf.

¹⁷ <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa/integrity>.

¹⁸ <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/intergovernmental-support/cepa/transparency>.

¹⁹ Hudon, P-A., Haren M. T., Gartner J-B., Bergeron F., Côte A.: Public Healthcare Procurement Strategies in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Scoping Review, *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* (August 2025) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12573135/>.

²⁰ Hoekman B, Shingal A, Eknath V, Ereshchenko V.: COVID-19, public procurement regimes and trade policy. *World Econ.* (February 2022, 45(2)) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8013529/>.

²¹ Hudon, P-A., Haren M. T., Gartner J-B., Bergeron F., Côte A.: Public Healthcare Procurement Strategies in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Scoping Review, *International Journal of Health Policy and Management* (August 2025) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12573135/>.

²² Folliot Lalliot, L., Yukins, C.R.: COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Public Procurement. *Time for a New Normal? 1 Concurrences – Competition Law Review* No. 3 3-2020 1 pp. 46-58 (Sept. 2020) https://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2763&context=faculty_publications.

and reduced accountability and transparency in contracting.²³ Governments need to be alert for issues such as manufacturing and supplying counterfeit pharmaceuticals, product substitution (replacing goods with substandard products) and falsification of documents to meet government procurement requirements. In order for countries to manage these risks, public procurement laws, regulatory frameworks and strong oversight institutions are crucial. In countries that enact emergency legislations, shifting power to the executive level at the expense of regular parliamentary oversight, the role of anti-corruption agencies and civil society becomes key in holding governments accountable, including with regard to procurement.

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT LAWS, REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AND OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS

Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic demand additional safeguards to be embedded in legal and regulatory frameworks. These include predefined emergency procedures with thresholds and time limits, mandatory ex-post disclosure of direct awards, rapid price and supplier risk checks, and whole-of-government frameworks for strategic sourcing. These measures can be incorporated before crises and stress-tested regularly.²⁴

Some core requirements for transparent, accountable, and efficient public procurement are well established in the UN Commission on International Trade Law's Model Law on Public Procurement (UNCITRAL Model Law on Public Procurement). They include clear legal bases; competitive and proportionate procedures (including in emergencies); early market engagement; open data across the contract lifecycle; independent oversight; and a professionalized procurement workforce. The UNCITRAL Model Law sets out procedures and principles aimed at achieving value for money, objectivity and fairness, participation, competition, integrity and transparency, and remains a benchmark for national reform.²⁵

The UNCITRAL Model Law has provisions for procurement in circumstances of 'extreme urgency'. This allows procuring entities to use expedited procedures when the need for goods, construction or services could not have been foreseen, is not attributable to the procuring entity, and when the use of standard procurement methods would be impractical. Even under such circumstances,

the UNCITRAL Model Law requires procuring entities to maintain adequate records, apply appropriate disclosure measures, and ensure that procurement decisions remain subject to subsequent review and audit.²⁶ Experience during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of these safeguards. Reviews by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and the INTOSAI Development Initiative found that many Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) played a critical role in assessing emergency procurement measures, identifying risks of reduced competition, limited transparency, and weak documentation. Their findings underscored the need for clear audit trails, timely public disclosure, and strengthened oversight mechanisms even during crises.²⁷ Building on these lessons, international good practices increasingly emphasize the use of pre-approved standard templates, framework agreements, and emergency procurement protocols that can be activated rapidly while maintaining transparency and accountability, an approach widely used during the pandemic. Such model laws can serve as guidance for national legislation based on good practices.

In addition, it is crucial to strengthen the role of oversight institutions, including SAIs in emergency procurement. UN CEPA's Principle of Independent Oversight underscores that sustaining public trust requires oversight bodies to operate independently and on the basis of professional considerations. In practice, SAIs serve both pre-emptive and corrective functions, helping to deter misconduct and address failures in emergency procurement systems.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT: LEVERAGING BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

Emergency conditions can amplify procurement biases such as over-reliance on familiar suppliers, skipping oversight, or prioritizing speed of delivery over quality.²⁸ Discretionary decision-making, conflicts of interest and weak accountability structures amplify behavioural risks in procurement, making integrity safeguards such as staff rotation, disclosure obligations, and independent

²³ Hoekman B, Shingal A, Eknath V, Ereshchenko V.: COVID-19, public procurement regimes and trade policy. *World Econ.* (February 2022, 45(2)) <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8013529/>.

²⁴ OECD: Public Procurement and Infrastructure Governance: Initial Policy Responses to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Crisis (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1787/c0ab0a96-en>. World Bank: Ensuring Integrity in Governments' Response to COVID-19. Washington, D.C. (2020). <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/801501588782665210/ensuring-integrity-in-governments-response-to-covid-19>.

²⁵ United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL): *Model Law on Public Procurement*, adopted by UNCITRAL at its forty-fourth session (2011). https://uncitral.un.org/en/texts/procurement/modellaw/public_procurement.

²⁶ UNCITRAL: Model Law on Public Procurement, adopted at the forty-fourth session of UNCITRAL, Articles 25, 27, 58–63 (2011). <https://uncitral.un.org/sites/default/files/media-documents/uncitral/en/2011-model-law-on-public-procurement-e.pdf>.

²⁷ INTOSAI & UN (2021). Working during and after the Pandemic: Building on the Experience of Supreme Audit Institutions for Strengthening Effective Institutions and Achieving Sustainable Societies https://www.intosai.org/fileadmin/downloads/news_centre/events/un_int_symposia/reports_un_int_symp/en/EN_25_Symp_2021_proceedings.pdf; INTOSAI International Development Initiative. (2024). Was government spending on COVID-19 transparent, accountable and inclusive? Conclusions, Insights and Lessons Learned from TAI Audits <https://idi.no/our-work/initiative/tai-tai-audits/>.

²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): Guidebook on Anti-Corruption in Public Procurement and the Management of Public Finances (2013). https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2013/Guidebook_on_anti-corruption_in_public_procurement_and_the_management_of_public_finances.pdf.

monitoring essential to enhance the resilience of procurement systems.²⁹

The professionalization of procurement officials through competency frameworks, certification, rotation policies to reduce conflicts of interest, and surge capacity arrangements is essential, especially during emergency situations. Moreover, individual capacity must be reinforced by organizational cultures and behavioural norms that reward integrity, transparency, and learning. As emphasized in UN DESA's report on Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,³⁰ organizational culture and everyday practices play a decisive role in shaping behaviour, particularly under stress and uncertainty. At the institutional level, rules, standard operating procedures (SOPs),³¹ and accountability frameworks set expectations; at the organizational level, culture and incentives guide their application; and at the individual level, skills, ethics, and behavioural awareness shape day-to-day procurement decisions.

Behavioural nudges can also help counter these³² procurement biases and behavioural risks by defaulting to framework catalogues rather than sole-source purchases, presenting multiple supplier options, requiring justification when competition is bypassed, and using public dashboards to enable real-time scrutiny and encourage social accountability.³³

LEVERAGING E-PROCUREMENT AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFICIENT PROCUREMENT

End-to-end e-government procurement (e-GP) platforms, when designed to publish contract-life-cycle data in line with the Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS), can keep public procurement fast, smart and open during crises. Examples include enabling automated notices, e-bidding, framework catalogues, price analytics and machine-readable disclosure. The OCDS provides a common schema to publish data on planning, tender, award,

contract and implementation phases of procurement.³⁴ The United Nations E-Government Survey 2024 notes that a total of 135 countries (70 per cent) have dedicated e-procurement portals, an increase of 4 per cent since 2022, indicating that countries increasingly recognize the value of these systems in enhancing transparency and efficiency.³⁵

Box 2

Innovative procurement practices

Countries have piloted innovative approaches that combine transparency, technology and inclusive design in procurement systems, including the adoption of dedicated e-procurement portals to enhance transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

UMUCYO e-Procurement, Rwanda: A single-channel e-GP system that automates procurement plans, tenders, payments and disclosure, with mobile-money integrations that lower access barriers for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly relevant during disruptions.

Preventive and Reactive Alert System (Sistema de Alerta Preventiva y Reactiva (SAPR)), Dominican Republic: A preventive oversight system that uses real-time red-flag indicators and automated alerts to safeguard billions in public funds. By shifting procurement monitoring from reactive to preventive, SAPR has improved compliance with procurement law, strengthened trust, and demonstrated strong potential for replication across the region.

Women-Led Companies Through Public Market (ChileCompra's "Sello Empresa Mujer"), Chile: By flagging women-led firms in the national marketplace and adjusting procedures, this UN Public Service Awards 2019 winner from Chile expanded inclusive access to public contracts, an equity and integrity innovation especially relevant when small suppliers are squeezed in crises.

Inno-KONEPS, Republic of Korea: A specialized e-procurement track for innovative products that sources ideas from users and suppliers, accelerating problem-solving with structured transparency and competition.

E-Complaints System, Albania: A digital platform that transformed slow and opaque procurement complaints processes into a transparent, efficient and real-time system. Integrated with e-Albania, it publishes all complaints and decisions openly, halved late decisions, reduced appeals, cut costs for businesses, and boosted trust among suppliers.

Prozorro.Sale, Ukraine: A transparent e-auction system for public assets that increased bidders and revenues through open, rules-based online sales. The system showed that radical transparency can thrive even amid crisis conditions and was awarded a UN Public Service Award in 2022.

²⁹ Implementing the OECD Recommendation on Public Procurement in OECD and Partner Countries, pp. 45–47 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1787/02a46a58-en>.

³⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (New York: United Nations, 2021), chapter 8. <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/publications/report-changing-mindsets-realize-2030-agenda-sustainable-development>.

³¹ World Bank: Ensuring Integrity in Governments' Response to COVID-19 (2020). <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/801501588782665210/ensuring-integrity-in-governments-response-to-covid-19>.

³² See, for example, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): *Using behavioural insights to respond to COVID-19*. 7 May (2020). <https://www.undp.org/stories/using-behavioural-insights-respond-covid-19>.

³³ Open Contracting Partnership: Monitoring COVID-19 emergency procurement with data (2020). <https://www.open-contracting.org/2020/03/25/monitoring-covid-19-emergency-procurement-with-data/>.

³⁴ Open Contracting Partnership: *Open Contracting Data Standard*. <https://www.open-contracting.org/data-standard>.

³⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2024 United Nations E-Government Survey - Governing in the Digital Era for Sustainable Development. New York: United Nations, Chapter III, p. 65. [https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2024-09/\(Web%20version\)%20E-Government%20Survey%202024%201392024.pdf](https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2024-09/(Web%20version)%20E-Government%20Survey%202024%201392024.pdf).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following policy recommendations outline actions for governments at all levels to ensure accountable and efficient public procurement in crisis situations.



Be aware of risks: While special measures are warranted in emergencies, governments need to be aware of the risks associated with diverging from regular procurement practices, including possible higher costs and vulnerability to fraud, as well as reduced accountability and transparency in contracting.



Establish emergency procurement frameworks: Effective emergency procurement frameworks must allow for rapid delivery of essential goods and services while ensuring transparency, oversight and accountability. Predetermined thresholds, roles, and lines of authority allow procedures to be activated immediately in a crisis, reducing delays and discretionary decisions. Built-in mechanisms for realtime oversight, documentation, and audit ensure that accelerated processes do not weaken internal controls or expose public resources to misuse. Regular drills and stress-testing of procedures help maintain readiness and ensure that speed is matched with value for money and integrity safeguards.



Strengthen public procurement laws: The UNCITRAL Model Law on Public Procurement provides a clear foundation for transparent and efficient procurement, including in emergencies, by outlining competitive and appropriate procedures, timely disclosure, and independent oversight.



Digital procurement systems: Digital procurement systems, particularly end-to-end e-procurement platforms aligned with the Open Contracting Data Standard, can reinforce transparency and real-time monitoring. When thoughtfully designed and implemented, these measures help maintain trust, uphold integrity, and ensure that public resources are used responsibly when they are needed most. Backup procedures, for when digital systems fail, which can happen particularly during disasters, are crucial.



Train and build the capacity of public procurement officials: Effective implementation of anti-corruption measures depends on a skilled and professional procurement workforce, supported by clear standard operating procedures, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and mechanisms that reduce discretion under pressure. Organizational cultures and behavioural norms that reward integrity, transparency, and learning also contribute to strengthening workforce capacities. Regular inter-agency rotation of procurement officers is recommended to reduce the risk of undue familiarity between officials and vendors.