

Webinar on Safeguarding Integrity in the COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific

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Summary and Recommendations

by

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Thank you, Paul and Jeroen for sharing the key challenges and public integrity measures that can help policy makers, anticorruption agencies and international financial institutions to ensure that the COVID-19 response is protected from corruption and bribery.

To summarize the presentation, I would like to highlight the following key integrity risks:

- Emergency procurement of large quantity of goods and services leads to increased risk of fraud and corruption.
- Lack of stockpile of the emergency supplies results in reverse competition and paradigm shift in corruption schemes.
- Derogations in management of the ongoing public contracts in emergency situations open doors to corrupt practices.
- Relaxing accountability, oversight and controls to urgently disburse funds poses a high risk to effective use of resources.

Key short-term policy measures to prevent fraud and corruption are focused on:

- Keeping and maintaining all records of emergency procurement and transactions.

- Ensuring transparency and access to procurement and disbursement activities;
- Developing necessary guidelines for emergency procurement and other accountability processes; and

At the same time the main long-term measures include:

- Improving emergency procurement and internal control regulations.
- Investing in digitalization, open data platforms and remote access to documentation and records; and
- Ensuring that investigators and auditors remain independent and have resources to continue their important work.

However, the most important recommendations remain the same:

- Assess corruption risks and develop appropriate mitigation and prevention measures;
- Respect the rule of law, national anticorruption legislations, and international anticorruption standards; and
- Strengthen accountability, transparency and oversight.

Given that most of the Initiative focal points are from anticorruption or law enforcement agencies, we would like to encourage these agencies to support their procuring and contracting authorities in this difficult time by making them aware about corruption and fraud risks and empowering them with necessary knowledge and skills to identify and prevent potential integrity violation.

We are aware that several anticorruption and procurement agencies in Asia-Pacific were successful in helping government to manage emergency procurement, economic and social safety programs. It would be useful if these countries share their knowledge and good practice with other less experienced countries to ensure that emergency assistance is not undermined by corruption and other illicit activities. We, at the Secretariat of the Anticorruption Initiative, can assist in facilitating and coordinating the sharing of best practices. Please let us know how else the Secretariat can help the countries in safeguarding integrity in the COVID response and recovery.

We believe that the policy measures presented at today's webinar are also relevant to ADB operations as emergency projects are prone to fraud and corruption. We encourage our colleagues in regional departments and procurement to properly assess integrity risks associated with the emergency projects. The policy recommendations presented today will also help ADB to identify adequate risk mitigation measures. Our Office of Anticorruption and Integrity can help to assess integrity risks, develop relevant mitigation measures, and provide anticorruption awareness raising and capacity development activities for ADB borrowers.

With this short summary of the presentation and recommendations, I would like to move now to the next item in our program and requesting Lili to open the questions and answers session.