

CoST Philippines

The Philippines has several years of experience in fighting corruption through a number of transparency initiatives, and was the only pilot country in which CoST could seek to build on existing transparency initiatives. The challenge was to coordinate these initiatives into one integrated and cohesive effort that can ensure the transparency of material project information (MPI) throughout the entire cycle of a public sector construction project.

Commitment, participation, and management

CoST Philippines is directed by a multi-stakeholder group (MSG) that comprises representatives from government, the private sector, civil society organizations, the professions, and academe. It is supported by the CoST Champion, Undersecretary of the Department of Budget and Management Laura Pascua, under the Office of the President.

As part of its objective of building on existing initiatives, CostPhils signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Philippines Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS) and the Commission on Audit as enabling partners. PhilGEPS is the central portal that hosts information on the procurement of goods and general support services, civil works or infrastructure projects, and consulting services undertaken by procuring entities of the government. The Commission on Audit was appointed as the CoST Assurance Team because it could leverage existing data gathering processes.

Three procuring entities participated in the disclosure process: Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), and the Light Rail Transit Administration (LRTA).

Achievements

CoST Philippines has proved successful in tailoring the CoST approach by building on the existing transparency initiatives through the effective leadership of the MSG. The following achievements have been realised during the pilot:

- The CostPhils Foundation Inc. is the first independent not-for-profit organisation established to pursue greater transparency in construction.
- The MSG provided a space for likeminded individuals from government, the private sector, civil society, and professionals to come together and achieve a common goal.
- The MSG integrated the disclosure of MPI into PhilGEPS by publishing information from ten construction projects. In disclosing the MPI, the coverage of PhilGEPS's published information was extended from the tender process to the whole project cycle. The MPI can be obtained from www.philgeps.net.
- The MSG has built interest in CoST through extensive marketing, media briefings, and events. The Philippines is a good example where there is established and strong civil society momentum for transparency in construction and infrastructure.

CoST Philippines beyond the pilot

CoSTPhils Foundation Inc. is discussing with donors and their enabling partners how CoST will go forward. The ideas being considered include a second round of the assurance exercise by the Commission on Audit Team to cover ongoing infrastructure projects funded by the World Bank under the National Roads Improvement and Management Program Phase II (NRIMP2), and expansion into infrastructure projects of the local government units funded by the Millennium Challenge Fund

The aspiration is to show the effectiveness of CoST on current ongoing projects to convince the Commission on Audit to make the assurance exercise a part of its normal operations, covered by annual general appropriations.