



CoST and the Open Government Partnership

This briefing note has been prepared for delegates at the OGP Annual Meeting in Brasilia on 17 & 18 April 2012. It introduces the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST) and briefly describes how it can help OGP participating countries meet their commitments.

Overview of CoST

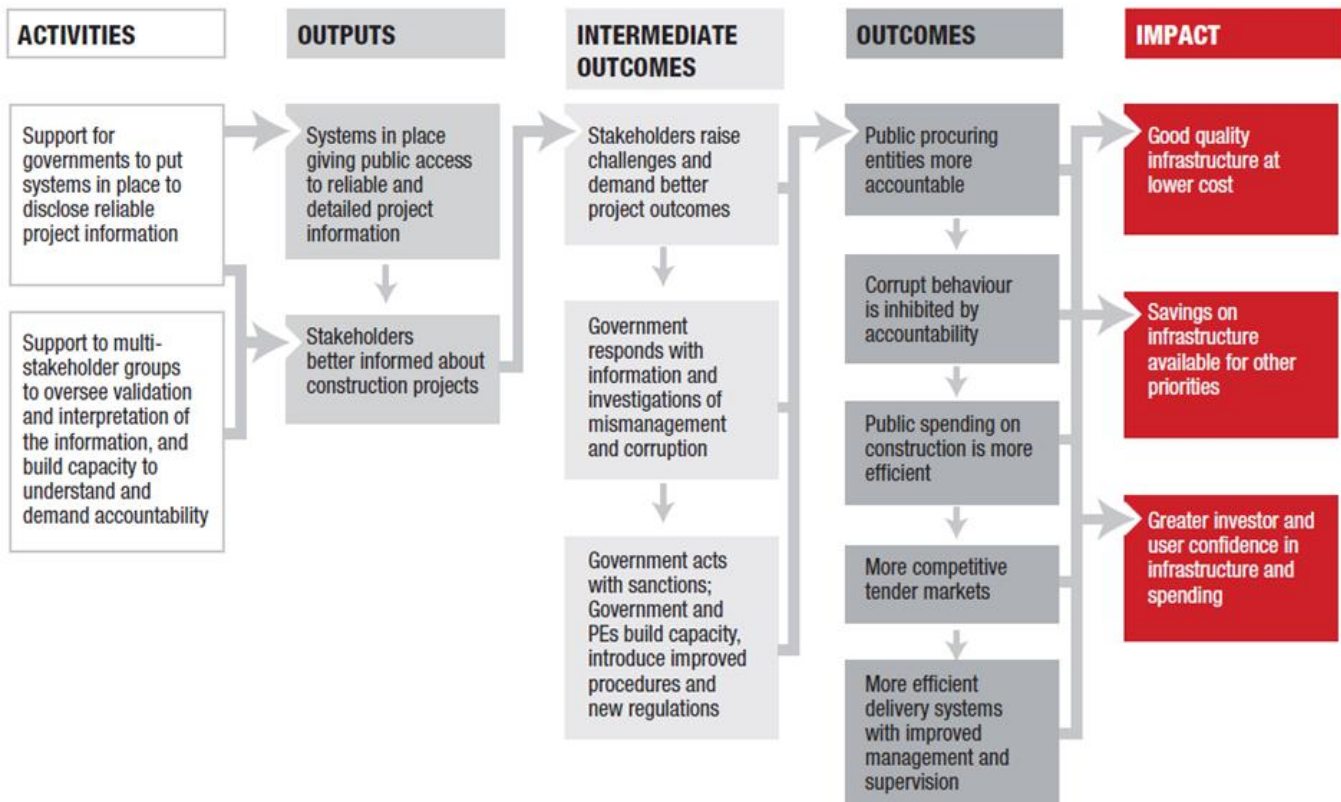
CoST aims to improve the value for money spent on public infrastructure by increasing transparency in the delivery of public sector construction projects. This approach produces domestic and international benefits through helping to curb mismanagement, waste, and corruption and reducing risks to public safety from poor building practices. It also helps to improve public trust and fairness in competition for contract awards and encourages foreign direct investment and development finance into a country's construction sector. CoST is structured around strong national programmes that are supported by a

small international Board and Secretariat. National programmes currently include Ethiopia, Guatemala, Malawi, Philippines, Tanzania, United Kingdom, Vietnam and Zambia.

The World Bank is supporting CoST with a grant valued at \$1.5 million over three years. The lessons from a successful three-year pilot project are being incorporated into the design of a global programme that will be launched later this year.

CoST is poised to make a significant contribution to improving value for the money invested globally in public sector infrastructure. Its approach is tried and tested, it has proven viable in diverse countries and with adequate financing it can be rapidly scaled-up. As a practically focused and country led initiative it has great potential to be aligned with global transparency initiatives such as OGP and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).

CoST Results Chain



OGP Principles & CoST

OGP Principles	Alignment with CoST
Transparency: information on government activities and decisions is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public and meets basic open data standards (e.g. raw data, machine readability)	CoST supports the disclosure of information throughout the construction cycle. Participating governments commit to this process through establishing a 'Formal Disclosure Requirement', which often forms part of national procurement regulations. CoST is also developing a 'construction transparency' index that participating countries report against.
Citizen Participation: governments seek to mobilise citizens to engage in public debate, provide input, and make contributions that lead to more responsive, innovative and effective governance.	National CoST programmes are steered by a Multi-stakeholder group that includes representatives of civil society and business. Civil society is also a key target audience for the information that is disclosed as it enables them to hold government to account.
Accountability: there are rules, regulations and mechanisms in place that call upon government actors to justify their actions, act upon criticisms or requirements made of them, and accept responsibility for failure to perform with respect to laws or commitments.	Government procuring entities are responsible for proactively disclosing an agreed set of information that is accurate and accessible to stakeholders. CoST ensures mechanisms exist through which citizens can raise concerns and obtain answers to their questions.
Technology and Innovation: governments embrace the importance of providing citizens with open access to technology, the role of new technologies in driving innovation, and the importance of increasing the capacity of citizens to use technology.	CoST supports the development of information systems that help to inform and empower citizens and enable them to hold decision makers to account.

How to join CoST

Those interested in finding out more about CoST and exploring the possibility of joining the global programme should contact the CoST International Secretariat (see below).

This usually involves an initial 'engagement phase' in which the Secretariat works with the interested parties to determine how CoST could be aligned with existing initiatives and structured to help meet national priorities. This phase ends either when the country applies for and is accepted as a participating country, or when it decides that it does not intend to proceed further with CoST.

The CoST Board designates a country to be 'participating' in the CoST programme when it receives a formal request from the country's designated government entity together with a viable implementation plan. The Secretariat assists in the completion of the implementation plan and it should include the following commitments:

- A desire to enhance transparency and accountability in the construction sector and to adopt CoST principles
- A public pronouncement of intent to implement a programme for increasing transparency in construction

- An intent to engage with the private sector and civil society in oversight of the construction transparency programme
- Commitment of at least one infrastructure procuring entity to participate initially in implementing the programme
- Commitment to liaise and share information with the international CoST Board and Secretariat during implementation of the programme.

Conclusion

CoST is tried and tested and it has proven effective in diverse political and economic environments. It is available to OGP countries, as a cost effective tool that can be incorporated into their action plans and help them meet their country commitments.

The International Secretariat is ready to work with OGP participating countries to explore how CoST can help them obtain better value for the money invested in infrastructure.

For more information see www.constructiontransparency.org

Contact us at CoST@engineersagainstopoverty.org