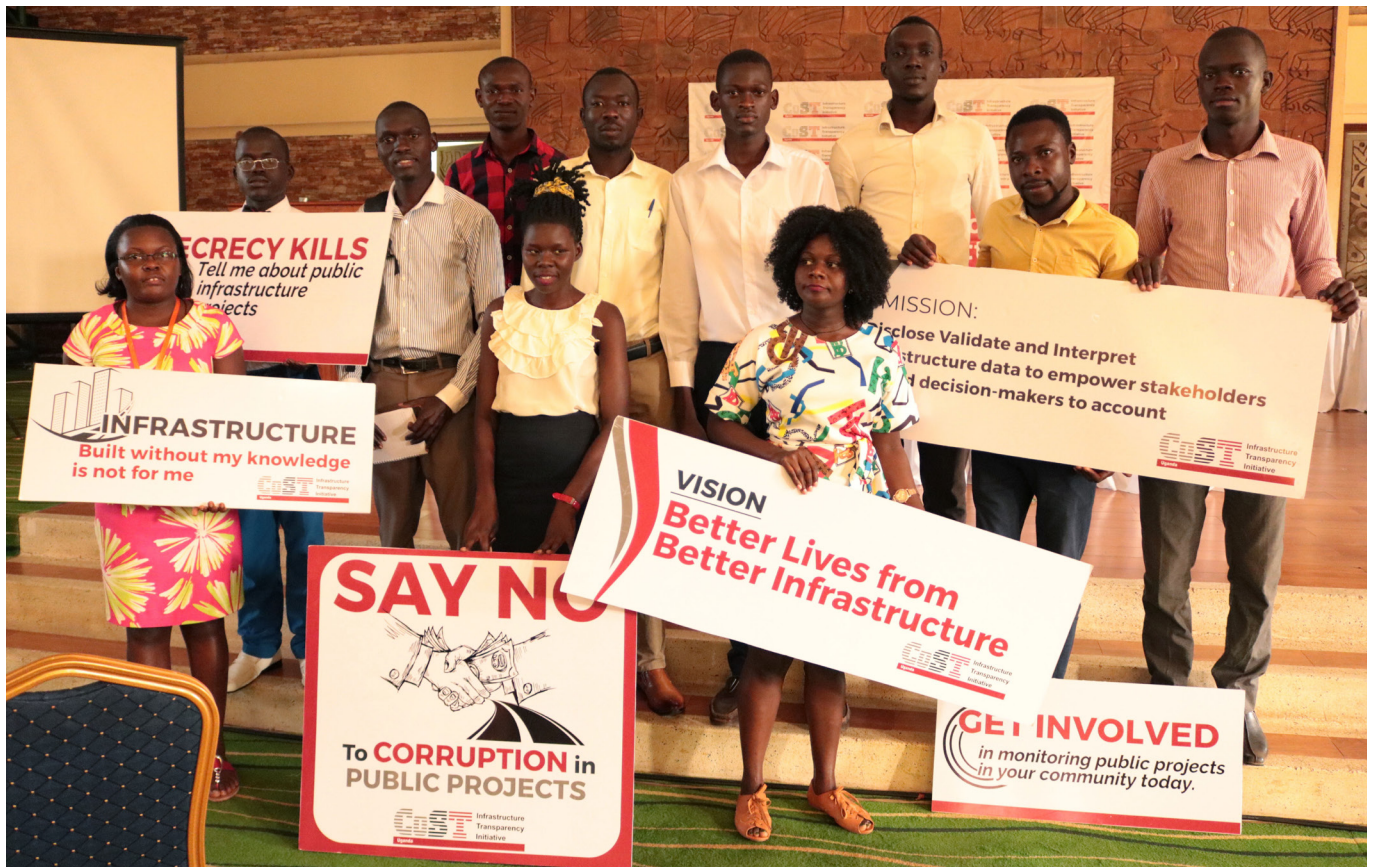


# Improving infrastructure transparency in Africa

In today's world, technology has been used to leverage delivery of public services across various sectors. CoST, the Infrastructure Transparency Initiative has advanced use of technology to promote infrastructure transparency through open data platforms. In this case study, we discuss key achievements and lessons on disclosure of infrastructure data using open data platforms integrating the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (CoST IDS) and the Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard (OC4IDS) with experiences from our Members in the Africa region.

The evolution of disclosure platforms in the Africa region provides key lessons, on what factors have facilitated swift disclosure that was a challenge a decade ago. In the past two years, three of our members including Malawi, Uganda and STMA (Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly)-Ghana have moved from disclosing a handful of projects to approximately 757 projects. We have seen these members make strong commitments and actions on data use, with Uganda and STMA-Ghana launching open data analytical dashboards that provide real time reports to facilitate reforms and decision making processes in the sector. Ethiopia and Mozambique have also recently completed their disclosure platforms and with these, disclosure of infrastructure data should greatly improve in the medium and long term.



## Lessons from Africa

- **Disclosure requires systematic and strategic advocacy.** Unlike other programmes where implementation of CoST starts with designing a disclosure process, our member programmes in Uganda and STMA-Ghana built their disclosure advocacy efforts through assurance.



The assurance reports provided a strong foundation for engaging duty bearers on the need for clean and systematic data to facilitate social accountability interventions such as citizens barazas and citizens monitoring groups. Armed with assurance findings, the programmes called governments to action by putting in place strong disclosure frameworks to enhance transparency and facilitate project monitoring. In Uganda, engagements around business integrity influenced the procurement regulator to undertake reforms aligning the procurement portal with the CoST standard, to inform industry stakeholders' access to business opportunities.

- **Training and continuous engagements with public officials can influence change.** Over the years, CoST members have provided tailored disclosure trainings for public officials on the disclosure process. Public officials understood the CoST standard albeit their level of understanding was yet to be translated into actual results in regard to number of projects and data points published through open platforms.



During the training, our members further identified user needs and challenges that helped shape discussions with accounting officers. Among these included challenges of user manuals, access to internet, computers, issues of staff turnover, and in other instances like in Malawi, there were no designated officers responsible for disclosure of data. With this, our members have embarked on advocacy for governments to address the barriers that affect timely release of data. In Malawi for example, following the training and mentorship programme, public entities have designated officials responsible for publishing infrastructure data, this effort has seen the programme publish information on approximately 572 projects by July 2023.

- **The will of key stakeholders facilitates openness.** The announcement of the President of Malawi as the Champion of the programme strategically positioned CoST Malawi. The President of Malawi in August 2022, issued a directive operationalizing implementation of the disclosure requirement in the Procurement Law. Although, entities have a duty to comply with legal frameworks, we have learnt that for infrastructure projects, compliance requires both political and technical will and buy in. In STMA-



Ghana, the Assembly's Parliament was quick to approve a Formal Disclosure Mandate that has seen the programme increase number of entities publishing data to eight.

■ **For disclosure to flourish, the data should add value to the sector stakeholders' mandate.** At the onset of the engagements with stakeholders in Uganda, the CoST standard was seen as rocket science, introducing a new layer of requirement to officials' roles. However, through the assurance process, the alignment of the procurement portal, and the data analytical reports, CoST Uganda was able to demonstrate the value of the standard, and the relevance of disclosing infrastructure data. The reports provided an insight into the sector, at project and policy levels. Progressively, entities that never published data such as the Roads Authority, now lead in disclosing data proactively and reactively.



## Country experiences

### Uganda

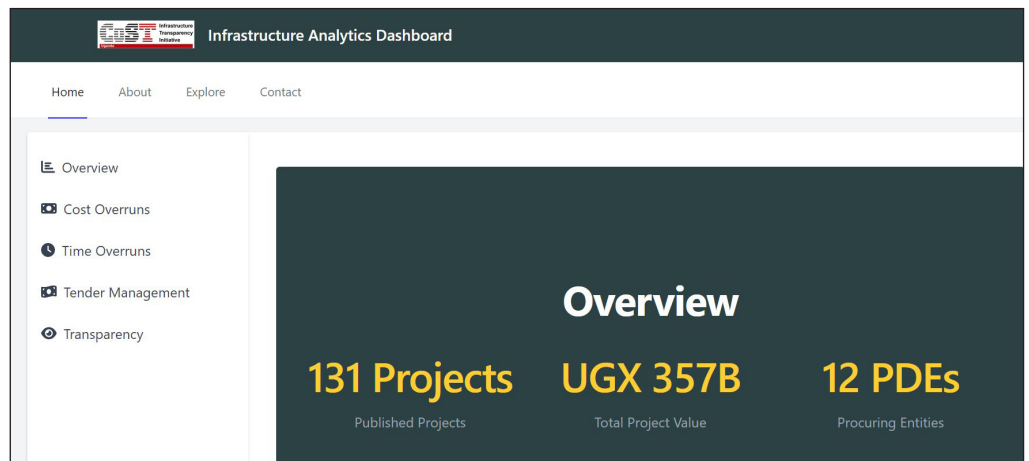
The [CoST Uganda 2017 Scoping Study](#) revealed a low level of disclosure with only 12 of the 40 data points in the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (IDS) legally recognized, and only 20% of these were being disclosed. Armed with these findings, the Multi-stakeholder Group (MSG) initiated series of lobby meetings and conducted the first assurance process which further established evidence on the levels of disclosure proactively and reactively. The Scoping Study and first assurance reports provided a strong basis for social accountability interventions among which included capacity building for sector stakeholders on disclosure, project monitoring, and held sector reform engagements. Following these strategic engagements, the Government's Ministry of Finance recognized the CoST standard in the methodology for assessing procurement systems report as a mechanism for enhancing transparency and reforms in the procurement sector.

With this provision, and following evidence from the assurance reports, the Government, through the regulator, the Public Procurement



## CoST impact: Improving infrastructure transparency in Africa

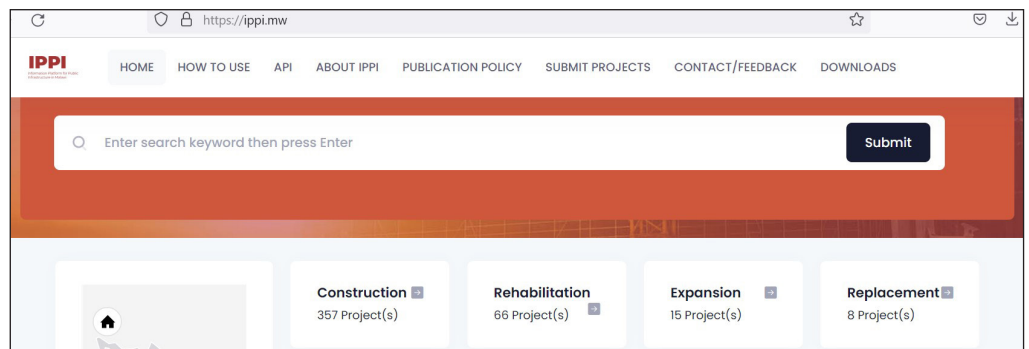
and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA), aligned the [Government Procurement Portal \(GPP\)](#) in 2021. By December 2022 disclosure had improved from 20% in 2017 to 77% as measured through disclosed data on the platform and assurance and by July 2023, over 131 projects



have been published. The Government will be integrating the standard in the ongoing development of the Electronic Procurement Portal (EGP). CoST Uganda has recently launched an online [infrastructure data analytical dashboard](#), which provides stakeholders and decision makers' real time analytical reports against set red flags to facilitate monitoring and inform decisions. Uganda lacks a formal mandate for disclosing infrastructure data, and the country is now challenged to put this in place as part of institutionalizing infrastructure transparency, this advocacy continues. More information about Uganda's process can be found [here](#).

### Malawi

Malawi enacted a Formal Disclosure Requirement in 2017 which was followed by regulations in June 2020, providing the basis for disclosure of infrastructure data. CoST Malawi has been building the capacity of



public officials to disclose data using the Infrastructure Data Standard through the IPPI. The IPPI is the Information Platform for Public Infrastructure in Malawi. However, the levels of disclosure of public infrastructure projects have been painfully low. In addition, the programme has been lobbying the Government to exert political pressure on public entities to comply with the law.

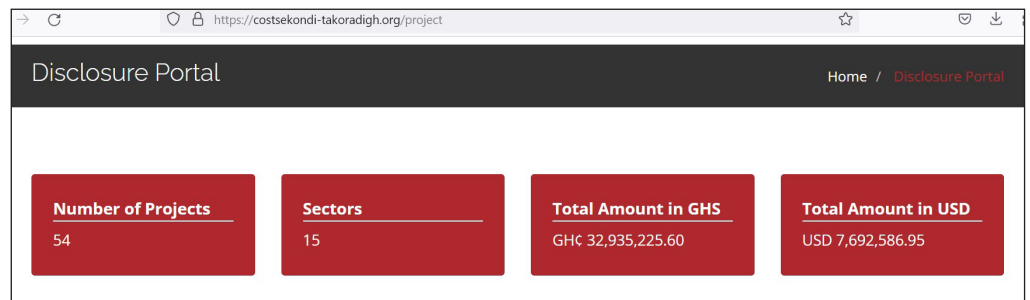
The President of Malawi in July 2022 during the launch of the IPPI, issued a directive requiring all public entities to be responsible for planning and implementing infrastructure projects to publish them before the 31st of August 2022. This directive saw an increase in disclosure to over 400 projects in a period of one year to over 572 projects by September 2023. There is generally a positive mindset shift within Government on disclosure of infrastructure data. Different ministries concerned with different public infrastructure projects have designated public relations officers who are responsible for responding to queries and concerns from the public. They have had several interactions with various CSOs and the media regarding public infrastructure procurement in the country, despite the slow government procedures. Unlike many CoST members, Malawi has a strong legal and policy framework including an FDM (Formal Disclosure Mandate) providing for disclosure of infrastructure data. The challenge

remains with implementation and compliance monitoring. The MSG will be strengthening their efforts in engaging government to address the existing barriers to full disclosure of infrastructure data such as perceptions of public officials, enhance compliance with the disclosure mandate, and increase awareness of the platform across the country, among others.

## STMA-Ghana

In Ghana, [CoST Sekondi Takoradi](#) Metropolitan Assembly secured an FDM providing for formal disclosure in the assembly, developed a disclosure portal and has since 2019

included additional seven assemblies to publish data on their platform. By December 2022, the portal had been used by eight local governments and other government entities within the Western Region of Ghana. The portal hosts a total of over 54 projects from 15 sectors, approximately USD 7,155,333.08. To facilitate data use, the programme has launched an Infrastructure [Monitoring Tool](#) (EIMT), and an analytical dashboard that facilitates real time [infrastructure data analytical](#) reports to inform decisions, and project monitoring. These platforms are aimed at helping citizens, the media and civil society actors to effectively monitor performance of infrastructure projects.



## PROJECTS PUBLISHED:

**131**

Uganda

**572**

Malawi

**54**

STMA-Ghana

## Other regions and looking ahead

As Ethiopia and Mozambique take strides to enhance disclosure of infrastructure data through the alignment of the e-GP and development of a dedicated platform respectively, we are pleased to see this improvement in the region.

We hope the worry of disclosure in the region is now history.

All has not been rosy. Developing disclosure frameworks across the region has experienced challenges; including, low turn up of public officials for trainings, lack of compliance with disclosure legal frameworks, delays in securing legal reforms for transparency, inherent challenges with access to internet and hard ware such as computers especially within lower level local governments making consistent disclosure complex. These constraints among others will require urgent action by governments to sustain the efforts advanced for enhancing infrastructure transparency, facilitate accountability and citizen participation. But we are proud of the efforts and strides achieved so far and look forward to the challenges to disclosure frameworks being tackled in the future.

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