



PUBLIC CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

PPDC African Justice & Procurement Transparency Research

Background

Across many African countries, justice institutions face systemic inefficiencies including slow case processing, weak court record systems, and prolonged pre-trial detention. At the same time, public procurement systems remain opaque, limiting citizen oversight and increasing corruption risks.

While global frameworks such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP) provide standards for transparency, many countries struggle with implementation, data availability, and citizen accessibility.

There is an urgent need for:

- Country-level evidence on **court digitisation gaps**
- Reliable data on pre-trial detention patterns **especially women and minors**
- Independent assessment of **procurement transparency against OGP standards**
- Local reform actors capable of sustaining engagement beyond research

The Public and Private Development Centre global offices will launch a pan-African research call to identify and support in-country researchers who will produce high-quality evidence while also serving as foundational partners for long-term institutional presence.

Program Goal

To generate credible, country-level research on access to justice and procurement transparency across selected African countries while building a trusted network of in-country institutional partners.

Thematic Areas

Researchers will focus on two core pillars:

1. Access to Justice

- Status of court digitisation (case management systems, e-filing, digital recording)
- Administrative efficiency gaps
- Pre-trial detention rates and duration especially for women and minors
- Compliance with national criminal procedure safeguards
- Budget allocations for justice sector reform

2. Public Procurement Transparency

- Assessment of procurement data disclosure
- Alignment with OGP commitments
- Availability of open contracting data
- Citizen access to procurement information
- Monitoring frameworks and redress mechanisms
- Gender responsive procurement

Why This Matters: Closing the Justice Gap in Africa

Across the world, access to justice remains one of the most significant governance challenges. According to the World Justice Project, an estimated 5 billion people globally experience unmet justice needs, meaning they cannot resolve everyday legal problems related to employment, land, family matters, public services, or basic rights.

In many African countries, these challenges are compounded by structural barriers within justice institutions. Court systems often rely on manual record keeping, fragmented case management systems, and limited digital infrastructure, which contribute to prolonged case timelines, prison overcrowding, and high levels of pre-trial detention. While several

reform initiatives and donor-supported programmes exist, the pace and depth of justice sector digital transformation remain uneven across the continent.

At the same time, governments and development partners are increasingly prioritizing rule of law, justice sector modernization, and digital governance as key pillars of sustainable development and democratic stability. However, evidence on what works, where gaps exist, and which reforms can scale effectively across African contexts remains fragmented.

This research initiative seeks to help close this evidence gap by generating actionable insights that can inform policy, institutional reform, and future governance investments.

Through this research, we aim to:

- Map the current state of justice sector digitisation across selected African countries
- Assess the drivers of court delays and pre-trial detention challenges
- Identify scalable digital and institutional reform opportunities
- Generate policy-relevant evidence that supports government

Procurement Transparency

Why This Matters: Procurement Transparency

Public procurement accounts for a significant share of government spending. Globally, procurement represents between 15–30% of national budgets and up to one-third of public expenditure, making it one of the most important areas for public financial accountability. Yet across many African countries, access to procurement data remains inconsistent, fragmented, or difficult for citizens, researchers, and oversight institutions to analyse.

When procurement systems lack transparency, it becomes harder to track how public funds are spent, evaluate whether contracts deliver value for money, or detect inefficiencies and corruption risks. Although several countries have joined initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and committed to improving procurement transparency, the level of disclosure, implementation, and citizen oversight varies widely across jurisdictions.

At the same time, donors and governments increasingly recognise open contracting and procurement transparency as central pillars of governance reform, anti-corruption strategies, and public service delivery improvements. However, comparable data and research that assess how procurement transparency commitments translate into real practice across African countries remain limited.

This research pillar seeks to generate evidence that helps close this knowledge gap and supports more effective reforms.

Through this research, we aim to:

- Benchmark procurement transparency commitments under the Open Government Partnership (OGP) across selected African countries
- Identify gaps in public procurement disclosure and data accessibility
- Map the level of civil society engagement and oversight in procurement processes
- Develop procurement transparency scorecards and reform recommendations that support governments, civil society, and development partners working to strengthen accountability in public spending.

Program Design

Phase 1 – Open Call

- Researchers apply from African countries
- Independent review panel selects fellows

Phase 2 – Research & Mentorship

- PPDC provides methodology framework
- Virtual research clinics and technical guidance
- Standardised data tools

Phase 3 – Publication & Country Briefs

Each fellow produces:

- 1 comprehensive country research report

- 1 policy brief (10–15 pages)
- 1 reform roadmap
- 1 stakeholder mapping document

Phase 4 – Institutional Pathway

High-performing researchers may:

- Become Country Research Leads
- Host PPDC country convenings
- Support formal office registration where viable

Outputs

- Country-level Justice Digitisation Scorecards
- Pre-Trial Detention Evidence Papers
- Procurement Transparency Index aligned to OGP
- Regional Comparative Synthesis Report
- Policy Roundtables (virtual or in-country)

Target Countries (Pilot Phase)

Priority may be given to:

- OGP member countries
- Countries with justice reform commitments
- Countries with procurement reform gaps

Criteria For Selection

The Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC UK and US) invites applications from researchers, policy experts, legal practitioners, and governance institutions across Africa for the inaugural cohort of the **African Justice & Procurement Transparency Research cohort**

This fellowship will generate high-quality, country-level research on:

- Court digitisation and justice sector efficiency

- Pre-trial detention trends and safeguards
- Public procurement transparency aligned with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) standards

The programme seeks to build a network of trusted country researchers who will produce credible evidence while contributing to long-term governance reform across Africa.

Fellowship Objectives

1. Produce rigorous country research on access to justice and procurement transparency.
2. Benchmark procurement systems against OGP commitments.
3. Assess digitisation of courts and case management systems.
4. Map pre-trial detention trends and procedural compliance especially for women and minors
5. Develop reform roadmaps and stakeholder engagement strategies.

Who Should Apply

We welcome applications from:

- Governance researchers
- Legal scholars
- Policy think tanks
- Civil society organisations
- Independent researchers with demonstrated experience

Applicants must:

- Be based in an African country
- Have at least 5 years of relevant experience
- Demonstrate prior research or policy publications
- Show institutional or operational capacity to deliver

Timeline

- Call Opens: 20th February 2026

- Application Deadline: 11th March 2026
- Selection Announcement: 27th March 2026
- Research Period: 2–4 months

Eligible Countries

- West Africa: Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal
- East Africa: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania
- Southern Africa: Zambia, Malawi
- Francophone: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire

Technical Competence (40%)

- Strong understanding of justice systems
- Familiarity with procurement frameworks
- Knowledge of OGP standards
- Demonstrated research methodology expertise

Strategic Alignment (20%)

- Alignment with PPDC's reform values
- Willingness to engage in long-term collaboration
- Capacity to host or coordinate country-level engagement

Access & Networks (20%)

- Existing relationships with:
 - Judiciary
 - Procurement authorities
 - Civil society
 - Policy actors

Institutional Readiness (10%)

- Ability to manage small research grants
- Basic administrative structure

- Reporting capacity

Diversity & Inclusion (10%)

Preference for:

- Women-led research initiatives
- Researchers from underrepresented regions
- Persons with disabilities
- Youth-led policy think tanks

Application Requirements

Applicants must submit:

1. Concept note (max 5 pages)
2. Methodology outline
3. CV(s) of lead researcher
4. Evidence of previous work
5. Institutional registration documents (if applicable)

Applications should be sent to: uk.ppdcc@ppdc.org and us.ppdcc@ppdc.org

Subject line: African Justice & Procurement Transparency Research *Application* – [Country Name]