



SUCCESS STORY

Open Bidding Minimizes Corruption, Improves Quality



The reconstructed offices of the Resident District Commissioner in Gulu.

“The quality of work is due to the honesty of the system.”

—The president of Emaus Construction, renovation contractor for the Gulu district office building

September 2009 – The Ugandan Government has reopened the Resident District Commissioner’s offices in Gulu, enhancing its presence in the country’s conflict-scarred north and establishing a standard for transparency in procurement and contract award processes.

In Uganda, the practice of bribing government officials is common among contractors seeking lucrative infrastructure projects. Reports have included the country among the world’s most corrupt nations, and critics malign the government for lack of transparency and failure to follow competitive-bidding processes.

By siphoning off project funds, corruption leads to substandard work, and infrastructure projects remain unfinished, unusable or, in some cases, hazardous to public safety, as contractors have cut corners to make ends meet.

USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) program in northern Uganda seeks to minimize corruption by encouraging transparency in procurement and contracting practices. OTI provided assistance to local government for the Gulu office renovation project, structuring the grant so contractors were selected through a competitive process.

Speaking at the building’s inauguration, Mohammed Mayanja, the Ugandan Presidential Advisor for Resident District Commissioners, instructed all involved parties to “keep your eyes on the projects, but keep your hands off the projects.” He also appealed to district leaders, encouraging them to make it difficult for contractors to subvert open-bidding processes with bribes.

Emaus Construction was awarded the renovation contract and, during the ceremony, received a Quality of Works certificate from the District Engineer, who said that although the building was originally constructed in 1933, it could stand for another 50 years or more due to the quality of the renovation work.

Accepting the certificate for Emaus Construction, the company’s president said that the transparency of the process was responsible for the success. “I did not give any bribe and neither did I receive any bribe,” he said. “The quality of work is due to the honesty of the system.”

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